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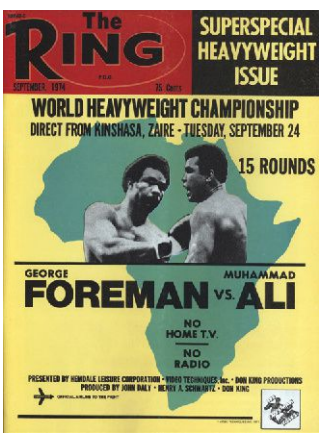
This photo of an amateur boxer examining his bloody nose in a bathroom at the iconic Gleason's Gym is just one of many compelling images captured by photographer Luc Kordas.

INSIDE: SPECIAL MUHAMMAD ALI POSTER



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Kiev mayor Vitali Klitschko took time out of his busy day to reveal the best he faced in the ring.

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The RING

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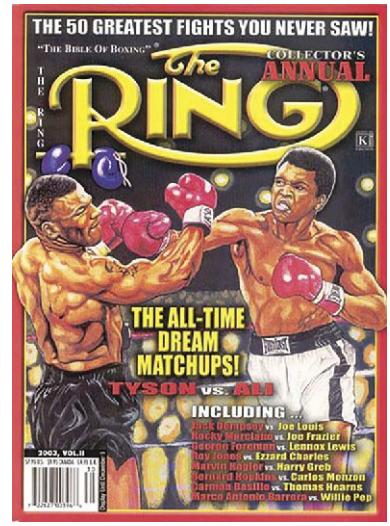
A POLL WITH WEIGHT



One of the great traditions in sports is the never-ending debate among fans about who the greatest athletes are or were. And, from my perspective, it doesn't get any better than when the subject is heavyweight boxers.

That's why we agreed to publish a poll of 30 boxing experts to rank the greatest heavyweights of all time (see Page 34).

The results are sure to stir passionate debate but the reality is that there is no right and wrong, which is one reason the exercise is so intriguing and entertaining. Everyone's opinion – assuming they have keen knowledge of boxing – is valid.

And the experts in the poll did come back with contrasting rankings, which was inevitable given the challenge they faced.

For example, how do you compare big men of the late 19th or early 20th centuries, of whom little if any video exists, to more recent heavyweights? You must rely primarily on the observations of those fighters' contemporaries and their records.

And what about the size difference between old-school heavyweights and the behemoths of today? Rocky Marciano weighed less than 190 pounds at his peak. Imagine him fighting Lennox Lewis, who was 6-foot-5 and around 245 pounds at his best.

The experts were told to set their own parameters, to use their own definition of "greatness," which produced interesting results.

Nos. 1 and 2 were predictable, as they always seem to be in such discussions. Muhammad Ali and Joe Louis are generally considered the two best big men in history, whichever order you want to rank them. Ali ended up No. 1 this time, Louis No. 2.

After that, there were some surprises. Jack Johnson, whose career started in 1897, ended up at No. 3. I don't have an issue with that based on what I've learned about Johnson over the years but some will wonder about it.

Rocky Marciano was No. 4. I don't think he has the resume to finish quite that high but many obviously do.

Mike Tyson at No. 9? Two spots ahead of his two-time conqueror, Evander Holyfield? No way, in my opinion. Tyson doesn't have the important victories to merit that positioning. Again, though, many will disagree with me.

And, again, that's what's fun about this. One person sees things a certain way, another has a different perspective and neither one of them is wrong.

That said, we believe the ranking should carry considerable weight because of the manner in which it was compiled. This isn't the opinion of one or two people. This is the work of 30 true experts – trainers, matchmakers, members of the media and historians – who painstakingly considered all candidates before submitting their lists.

Of course, no ranking is definitive, but this one is meaningful.

Enjoy. And let us know what you think. RING

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Miguel Berchelt (right) became a major player at 130 pounds by taking Francisco Vargas' WBC title in a brutal fight on January 28.

TOM HOGAN / GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

MORE WHINING

So just weeks after the Andre Ward-Sergey Kovalev fight, we have yet another promoter crying foul about a disputed decision in the bout between James DeGale and Badou Jack on January 14. Floyd Mayweather Jr., Jack's promoter, seems to think that because Jack was the "home fighter" he was somehow robbed in what was a really close fight that could have been scored for either fighter. I, for one, instead celebrate a truly outstanding contest where a draw seemed a fitting result, with both boxers displaying true grit and determination. And let's also be grateful that, in an era of protected fighters, we've had the opportunity to see the top two fighters at both super middleweight and light heavyweight face off in the space of two months.

Matt Connor
Lancashire, England

WRONG TACK

Everybody at the moment seems to be of the opinion that for women's boxing to break out on the national level we need to have a women's bout headline a card on primetime TV. I disagree. I think people just need to realize how good women's boxing is. And for that to happen, it needs more exposure. So why not generally feature women's bouts more often on televised fight cards? The casual fan, as well as the diehards, will then see a women's contest every time they tune in to boxing. And I don't think it will then be too long before they realize how talented and entertaining women boxers really are.

Owen Hollifield
London

NO ANGEL

Angel Garcia is an embarrassment to his son and the sport of boxing. His antics at the recent press conference with Keith Thurman were disgusting. I've seen plenty of rowdy press conferences. Usually it's a ploy to create interest and sell tickets. If throwing around racial slurs and threatening women is Angel's idea of selling tickets, though, then he truly is as classless as he appears. Maybe it's not fair to judge Danny Garcia by the actions of his father. However, as long as he tolerates these outbursts from people in his entourage, it makes him look bad. He is represented by the company he keeps.

Davis Clouse
Omaha, Nebraska

COMPETING SHOWS

Why do HBO and Showtime insist on showing boxing shows head-to-head? Most people missed the Francisco Vargas vs. Miguel Berchelt card on HBO, which had two sensational wars, because of the highly anticipated rematch between Leo Santa Cruz and Carl Frampton on Showtime. If HBO tried to take ratings away from Showtime, it didn't work. At the same time, their own ratings suffered and most people missed two great fights, at least live. The weekend before, there weren't any boxing shows and then the next week there are two great doubleheaders going head-to-head. Great night for boxing, and a bad one at the same time. Boxing already has to compete with MMA for ratings. It shouldn't compete with itself as well.

Victor Rivero
Pacifica, California

ON SECOND THOUGHT

I am sure I speak for many anticipating the Canelo Alvarez vs. GGG showdown when I say that I was disappointed when I heard about Canelo vs. Julio Chavez Jr. However, after thinking about the intricacies of the matchup, my intrigue began to grow. The size difference is interesting. We have yet to see Canelo come into a fight as the smaller man or heavier than 155 pounds. Chavez stands 6-foot-1 – three or four inches taller than Canelo. If Chavez takes his training camp seriously and can make weight without draining himself, it is going to be fun to see these two warriors mix it up, with Chavez trying to use his size, length and grit and Canelo using his boxing skills, timing and speed. Also, both fighters bring KO power along with Mexican pride. This bout might not go the distance.

Josh Lopez
Jersey City, New Jersey

THIS STINKS

"The Great Exhibition," "Sweet Science vs. Remedial Geometry." A rose by any other name is still the same. And thy name is BOVINE FECAL MATTER (Google it if need be). Anyone with a brain and access to the Conor McGregor boxing footage knows that he should never be allowed in a boxing ring with Floyd "Money" Mayweather, but don't be mad at either combatant if this fight gets made. Be mad at all the people who pay for the PPV. Supply is the favorite child of demand. Maybe Lalia Ali can fight Ronda Rousey on the undercard.

Tramond Nicholson
Milwaukee

HEAVY ANTICIPATION

I'm very excited about the Anthony Joshua-Wladimir Klitschko fight on the horizon – the young lion challenging the consensus No. 1 in the division (with Tyson Fury out). It's youth and strength vs. experience and strength. Will the same Wladimir who lost to Fury show up? Or will he be a man possessed and give his last great performance? Can't wait!

Vince Foreman
Surrey, British Columbia, Canada.

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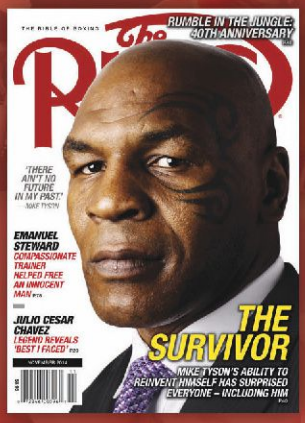

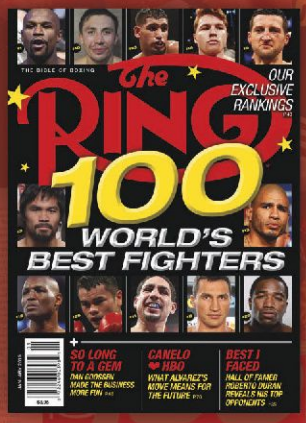

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ADVANCED DEGREES

RING MAGAZINE

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, regular contributor Gregg Morgan connected the two greatest boxers from Albuquerque – Hall of Famers Bob Foster and Johnny Tapia, the latter of whom will be inducted in June (see article on Page 66) – in nine steps. Foster was primarily a 175-pounder who last fought in 1978. Tapia topped out at 130¾ pounds and fought for the last time in 2011.

BOB FOSTER
fought
MUSTAFA WASAJJA,
who fought
MICHAEL SPINKS,
who fought
JIM MACDONALD,
who fought
RALPH MONCRIEF,
who fought
BERNARD HOPKINS,
who fought
OSCAR DE LA HOYA,
who fought
MANNY PACQUIAO,
who fought
MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA,
who fought
JOHNNY TAPIA

Albuquerque has been home to two of the most exciting fighters of the past 50-plus years, Bob Foster (left) and Johnny Tapia.

10

A MONTHLY BOXING LIST

This month:
Glen Johnson of Jamaica fought so many times outside his native country that he earned the nickname "Road Warrior." Other titleholders have fought in more countries than the former 175-pound champ, though. Here are 10 (in order of number of countries).

17 DeMarcus Corley

16 Emile Griffith

16 Saoul Mamby

15 Panama Al Brown

13 Muhammad Ali

13 Sugar Ray Robinson

12 Ismael Laguna

12 Archie Moore

12 Davey Moore

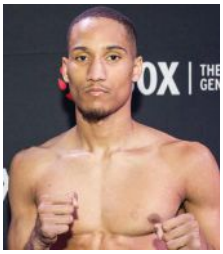
12 Jorge Castro

Honorable mention:
Ken Buchanan (11), Glen Johnson (11), Azumah Nelson (11), Alexis Arguello (10), Matthew Saad Muhammad (10), Carlos Ortiz (10), Wilfredo Vazquez (10), Manuel Medina (9), Winky Wright (8).

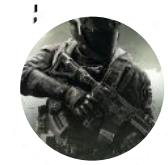
FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT

— Anson Wainwright



FIGHTER »	JARRETT HURD JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTENDER	LIAM WILLIAMS JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTENDER	ALANTEZ FOX JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT PROSPECT
MUSIC »	**"Hip-hop."**	"A bit of anything. I only listen to the radio for the gym."	"Hip-hop and rap."
CAR »	"2005 Chevrolet Malibu. Dream car, a Bugatti."	"I've got two cars, an Audi A3 and a Mercedes A200. I don't really have a dream car. I change my mind too often, so I keep changing my cars all the time."	"I have a license but don't have a car. My dream car is an **Audi A7**."
FOOD »	**"Pizza."**	"A tough one 'cause I love my food. Probably pizza."	"Pizza."
TATTOOS »	"I have, I'd say, 18. 'Swift' written across my chest. My trainer who passed away on my right shoulder. I have the name of another guy from the gym who passed away, who gave me pointers."	"I've got a full back piece, boxing themed. There's a big cross, boxing gloves, ring girl, portrait of myself in the ring and Miguel Cotto, who I've always looked up to."	"I have a tattoo across my back. It says, 'Heart of a Lyon, SlyAza Fox.' Lyon is spelled like that because it's my mom's last name. I've got two more on my forearm and one on the inside of my forearm."
ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING »	"**DeSean Jackson**, plays for the Washington Redskins."	"It's only ever boxing I like. Nothing really impressed me."	"It was Kobe (Bryant) before he retired, but now I kind of like Russell Westbrook."
MOVIE »	"'Paid in Full.'"	"I don't have one, I don't watch films."	"I watch too many movies to say which is my favorite. 'Transformers' is probably my favorite series, though."
VIDEO GAME »	**"'God of War.'"**	"I don't really do video games. If I do, I like fighting games like UFC and boxing."	**"'Call of Duty.'"**



THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH By **Michael Rosenthal**

GOOD

The rematch between **Leo Santa Cruz** and **Carl Frampton** on January 28 was satisfying for most fans, who were treated to a high-energy, competitive scrap between two top featherweights. Frampton's comments afterward also were satisfying. Fighters much more often than not complain publicly when they lose a decision after a hard-fought, evenly matched fight. A familiar refrain: "I thought I did enough to win," which might be an honest reaction but one that denies credit to a rightful winner. That's why Frampton's reaction to his first setback – by a majority decision – was so refreshing. "Leo's a tremendous fighter and he surprised me with his tactics," Frampton said immediately afterward. "If I can be honest, Leo deserved to win." Wow! You don't hear that every day. I suppose the most cynical among us would suggest that Frampton was simply fishing for a third fight between the rivals, which makes sense. I think it was a matter of a classy young man simply acknowledging what most of us thought after the final bell sounded: Santa Cruz had won the fight. Call it old-school good sportsmanship. Other fighters would be wise to take note.

BAD

The proposed **Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Conor McGregor** "fight" is a no-brainer from a business standpoint. The pay-per-view buy rate could exceed that of Mayweather-Manny Pacquiao, which would translate to nine-figure paydays for each of them. I don't see how they can pass that up. The "bad" aspect of this is that the whole thing is ridiculous. We already know the result, assuming Mayweather and McGregor fight under boxing rules and McGregor doesn't violate them. The Irishman is an accomplished mixed martial artist but he's a crude boxer, as all of the top UFC stars are. And a crude boxer would have zero chance – zero! – of beating Mayweather, arguably the best defensive boxer of the past half century. It would be more of an event than an actual fight, akin to a professional wrestling matchup in which the winner is predetermined. I suspect most of those who would pay to see it understand the reality, that McGregor would be cashing in on his name recognition. If that's the case – and those people still want to pay to watch it – I'm OK with that. I just hope no one out there believes this is a real fight.

WORSE

I have generally found trainer **Angel Garcia** to be amusing, a clever, if boorish spokesman for son Danny Garcia who can sell a fight and get under the opponent's skin. That's what trash-talk is all about. Angel Garcia demonstrated at a January 18 news conference to promote Danny's fight against Keith Thurman that one can take such talk too far, as he repeatedly hurled the N-word at Thurman during an emotionally charged exchange. Some seemed to dismiss Garcia's behavior as a nasty, but harmless product of pre-fight hype (see Page 20). Even Thurman didn't seem to be bothered much, although he did say that "some of it is a form of ignorance and unnecessary." To say the least. Angel Garcia insists he's not a racist, implying that such language is typical in the Philadelphia neighborhood in which he grew up. I don't know what's in Garcia's heart. I do know that tossing the N-word around as he did is dangerous. It is arguably the single most degrading word in the English language, implying that black people are somehow inferior to others. And the more it's used as Garcia used it, the more normal it becomes. That's unacceptable.

RING POLL

A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS

The biggest-possible all-Mexican matchup was recently announced. With that in mind, we asked: **What will be the result of the Canelo Alvarez-Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. fight?** More than three out of four of you believe Canelo will win. Here is how the voting breaks down.

THE PERCENTAGES

35.74	CANELO BY KO
22.72	CANELO BY WIDE DECISION
18.05	CANELO BY CLOSE DECISION
15.15	CHAVEZ BY KO
5.94	CHAVEZ BY CLOSE DECISION
1.76	DRAW
0.64	CHAVEZ BY WIDE DECISION

NOTE: 1,413 READERS VOTED

Vitali Klitschko (right) proved his mettle against Lennox Lewis.

VITALI KLITSCHKO

45-2 (41 KOs)

The Klitschko brothers never considered fighting one another but that doesn't preclude us from repeating a question asked many times over the years: Who would've won had they met in the ring?

Many would choose Vitali Klitschko in spite of Wladimir's prolonged dominance. Wlad is probably the quicker, better athlete; Vitali is tougher, the more natural fighter in the rawest sense.

And don't sell Vitali short in terms of his resume. The sturdy, 6-foot-7 "Dr. Ironfist" had three distinct reigns as heavyweight titleholder. The Ukrainian held the WBO belt in 1999-2000 and the WBC version in 2004 and '05 before "retiring" because of nagging injuries, including a torn ligament in his knee.

Four years later and in good health, he returned to boxing and reigned one more time – from 2008 to 2013 – before retiring to pursue a career in politics in his native Ukraine.

And Vitali never lost a fight that wasn't stopped by an injury. He was winning a defense of his WBO title against Chris Byrd in 2000 when he had to quit after nine rounds with a damaged shoulder. And his fight with Hall of Famer Lennox Lewis, which he also was winning on the cards, ended after six rounds because of horrible cuts.

Otherwise, Vitali was untouchable. He almost always was.

Klitschko started as a kickboxer – and won six world titles – before switching to boxing at 17 and never looking back. He won 195 of 210 amateur boxing matches and

reached the final of the 1995 World Championships, losing on points.

Then, after turning pro, he reeled off 24 straight victories – all inside the distance – to earn a shot at WBO titleholder Herbie Hide in June 1999. Klitschko won by a second-round knockout to win his first title and successfully defended two times, which led to the fight against Byrd. Klitschko was winning by a large margin on all three cards when he retired after the ninth round with what was later diagnosed as a torn rotator cuff.

He returned almost eight months later and won five consecutive fights, which set up the most important matchup of his career in June 2003. He agreed to face WBC titleholder Lewis, the undisputed heavyweight king and a 4-1 favorite, on only 12 days' notice. And he gave the champ all he could handle, outworking and outscoring him through six rounds.

Gruesome cuts above and below Klitschko's left eye preserved Lewis' title but Klitschko had demonstrated that he could fight on at least even terms with the dominant heavyweight of the era.

Klitschko bounced back quickly. The following year he won the title Lewis vacated by stopping Corrie Sanders, who had stopped Wladimir a year earlier. He successfully defended once before walking away because he believed his body could no longer hold up to the rigors of the sport.

In the end, he just needed time to heal. He emerged from retirement to regain the WBC belt against Samuel Peter and make him and Wladimir the only brothers to hold heavyweight titles simultaneously. Vitali successfully defended his title nine times before finally retiring for good.

In all, Klitschko (45-2, 41 knockouts) compiled a record of 15-2 in world title fights and had 13 successful defenses. He is expected to enter the International Boxing Hall of Fame when he becomes eligible in 2018.

Klitschko has been focused on politics in his troubled country since his retirement from boxing. He has been the mayor of Kiev since 2014.

"It's a big challenge to be the mayor – is much tougher than to be heavyweight champion," he said. "In the ring you have one opponent; in politics you have a lot of opponents and you have to prove your skills every day. It's not 12 rounds fight, it's not marathon, it's Ironman. You have to prove different skills, you have to build your team, you have to show your strong side and hide your weaknesses. It's very tough. I was never so tired after a fight as I was after a working day sometimes."

He says things are going well in the Ukrainian capital.

"I'm very happy," he said. "We've almost doubled the budget. I've changed my city and I enjoy that very much, to open new schools, new kindergarten, new street, and to change the life of my city, of my country. It's the main goal, why I took this task."

Klitschko, 45, has three children with his wife, Natalia. He has a Ph.D. in sports science. He also is part owner, with his brother, of K2 Promotions, which promotes Gennady Golovkin and Oleksandr Usyk, among others.

He graciously took time to speak to RingTV.com about the best he fought in 10 key categories.

BEST JAB

Larry Donald: It was very fast; it was difficult to see. It was like a flash.

BEST DEFENSE

Kevin Johnson: I (couldn't) find a key for his defense. He stayed on the back foot and it was difficult to hit him.

FASTEST HANDS

Herbie Hide: His hands were a blur, difficult to see.

FASTEST FEET

Donald: He had not just a good jab but also good leg work.

BEST CHIN

Danny Williams: I fought in Las Vegas against Danny Williams, who beat (Mike) Tyson. He had a good chin. My hands were swollen. I never saw my fists so swollen. I hit (him) so many times, so hard, and he didn't fall down.

SMARTEST

Lennox Lewis: I didn't have an IQ measurer in the ring. (Laughs.) Kevin Johnson was smart because I couldn't find the key to his defense. ... The smartest actually was Lennox. He had much more experience than anyone.

STRONGEST

Lewis: Lennox Lewis was strong because he's heavy, tall and big.

BEST PUNCHER

Corrie Sanders: (He was) fast and hit pretty hard. I've never met anyone who hit as hard as Corrie Sanders. I think a couple more punches like I received in the first round and I think the game is over. If I didn't have experience of my brother (who fought him previously), definitely I lose the fight against Corrie Sanders. He was a good puncher.

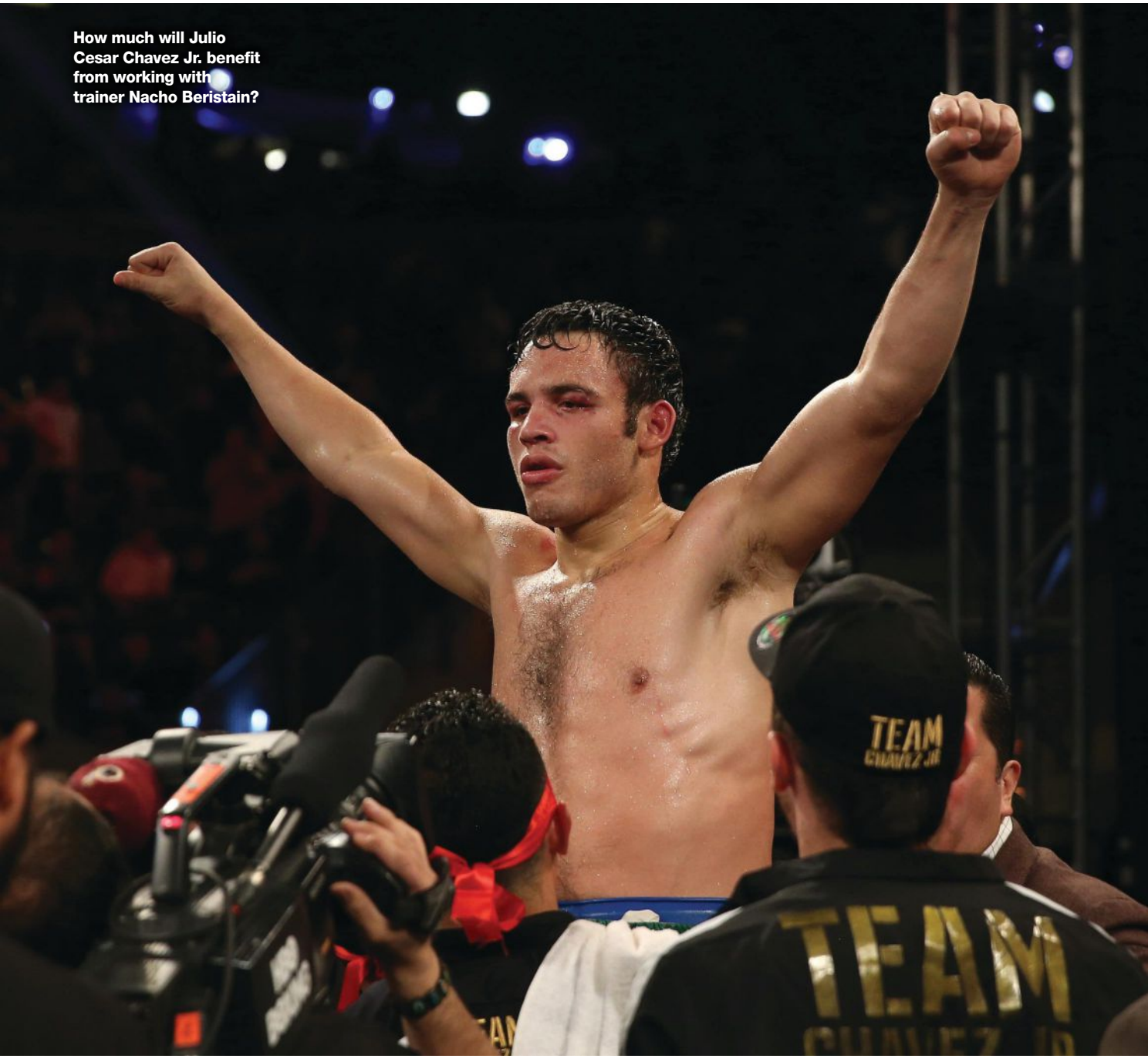
BEST SKILLS

Lewis: Lennox is (a) legend, strongest fighter I fought in the ring. I never missed so much punches as against Lennox. I proved my skills well against Lennox.

BEST OVERALL

Lewis: Strongest, toughest, smartest. He's the best one.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright



How much will Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. benefit from working with trainer Nacho Beristain?

DOLLARS AND SENSE

CANELO ALVAREZ VS. **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ JR.** MIGHT NOT BE THE MATCHUP YOU WANT TO SEE, BUT IT SERVES THE FIGHTERS AND THEIR HANDLERS

What's worse: Canelo Alvarez, the lineal middleweight champion, going yet another fight without taking on a top middleweight, or Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. getting yet another shot without deserving it?

It's been nearly five years since Chavez actually won a fight that

mattered, when he beat Andy Lee. It's been two years since he quit after getting embarrassed by Andrzej Fonfara. All he's done since is take decisions over two guys whom you probably couldn't pick out of a lineup, even if they were the only two people in the lineup.

All Chavez has left is his name. And even that name isn't his. He's gotten by on his dad's legacy and moderate talent. He wouldn't be loved as much were he not the son of a legend. He wouldn't be hated as much either. He'd just be another former titleholder.

At least Canelo is at last facing someone bigger than he is. Except there's a strong possibility that Chavez Jr. won't merely be a shell of his dad but rather a shell of himself. They're fighting at a very precise contractual catchweight of 164.5 pounds. Chavez has been a super middleweight or above for years. He has not exactly been known for his discipline with the scales. He'll need it; there's reportedly a $1 million penalty per pound, should either man come in overweight.

Whether Chavez Jr. makes weight or misses it, he's going for broke.

Perhaps that's one reason Chavez has brought on famed trainer Ignacio Beristain and infamous conditioning coach Angel "Memo" Heredia. Of course a fighter who likes marijuana would pick a guy known as "Nacho." Beristain's the latest choice for a fighter who's also had short-lived stints with some of boxing's other top cornermen. None of those lasted long. Chavez will either learn from the master behind Juan Manuel and Rafael Marquez, or he'll disappoint yet another father figure.

Chavez at least once did something Canelo has yet to do — face the best middleweight at the time. Chavez came up short against Sergio Martinez. Canelo has yet to stand tall against Gennady Golovkin.

There's a reason for that. When Oscar De La Hoya returned to running Golden Boy Promotions, he spoke of wanting to have the best fight the best. Ideals don't always prove ideal. David Lemieux lost to Golovkin. Lucas Matthysse was broken down by Viktor Postol. Golden Boy's roster these days is mostly prospects who cost money to develop. Court documents revealed the company would be much weaker financially if not for Canelo. Canelo losing, then, is a losing proposition.

This fight makes dollars and sense, even if it makes heads shake. Golden Boy is continuing to milk its cash cow before sending him to slaughter.

★ ★ ★

The bravest yet dumbest person alive is lucky to still be living, given that he embezzled at least $265,000 from Mike Tyson.

That's chump change given the hundreds of millions Tyson lost over the years, back when he didn't need a financial adviser to be out a mere hundreds of thousands, only a reliable hookup for cocaine. But Brian Ourand stole from Tyson and three other pro athletes from 2006 through 2011, after Tyson had retired and needed every remaining penny.

Ourand will spend time in prison and must pay restitution. Perhaps the best way to do that is to go into boxing promotion. After all, promoters can fleece their fighters and get away with it. The last one who allegedly stole from the former heavyweight champion was Don King.

Tyson accused King of taking $100 million from him. King settled a lawsuit for $14 million, leaving him — if the allegations were true — with a kingly sum.

★ ★ ★

There was already enough drama between Amir Khan and his family to make them the boxing version of the Kardashians. And then, of course, came the leak of a sex tape featuring Khan, footage that lasted about as long (and was about as one-sided) as his loss to Breidis Prescott.

I'm not sure which was more embarrassing — a boxer getting exposed or a boxer exposing himself.

Please, no jokes about being knocked stiff.

★ ★ ★

I'd rather watch 12 rounds of that video than tune in to see a proposed heavyweight title fight between Shannon Briggs and Fres Oquendo.

The WBA is sanctioning the bout for its secondary "regular" title," which we at THE RING don't recognize when there's also a "super" title in the division. Read that sentence again and then try to explain boxing to your friends who don't follow the sport.

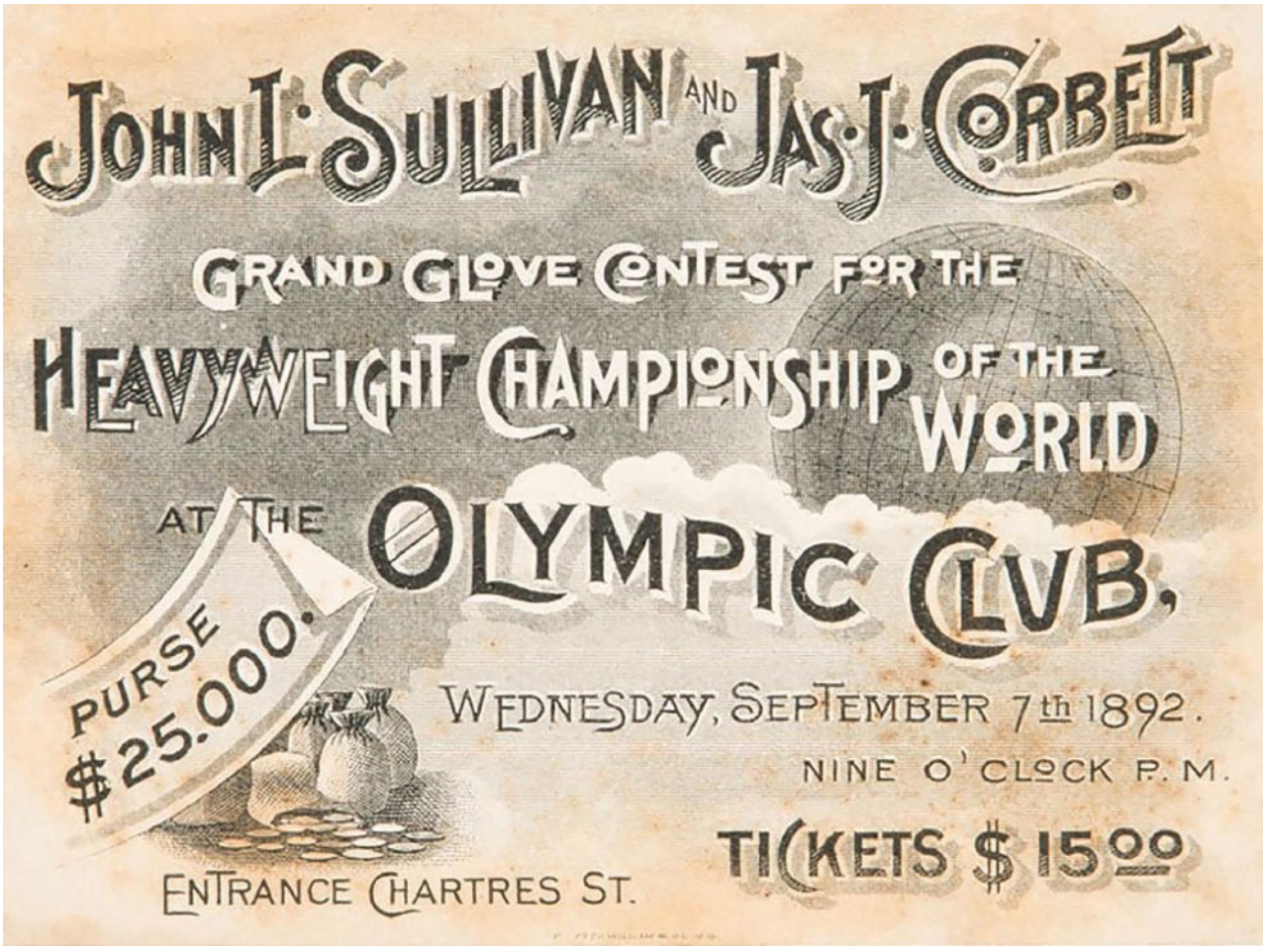
The "super" title will belong to the winner of Anthony Joshua vs. Wladimir Klitschko on April 29. An estimated 90,000 people will fill a stadium in London for that fight. Briggs and Oquendo will be lucky if they sell 900 tickets, or as we prefer to call that threshold, the Andre Berto Line.

Briggs is 45, hasn't fought for a title since Vitali Klitschko put him in a hospital back in 2010, spent 3½ years out of the sport and then spent a couple years beating nine opponents whose levels of talent were so minimal that Briggs might as well still have been retired.

Oquendo turns 44 in April and hasn't been seen since he dropped a close decision to Ruslan Chagaev in 2014. Oquendo sued for another shot at the title, got it and has been waiting for it ever since.

Apparently boxing isn't the only place where judges render bad decisions.

JOHN GURZINSKI



The ticket to this fight is Thomas Hauser's favorite.

PRIZED POSSESSIONS

THE AUTHOR HAS AN IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION OF MEMORABILIA, INCLUDING A BOOK SIGNED BY 176 TITLEHOLDERS

I've always been a collector. When I was a kid, I collected baseball cards and comic books. Eventually, my mother gave the comic books to a local children's hospital and I sold the baseball cards for a fraction of what they'd be worth today. That's life. If everyone kept their old treasures, they'd be less rare and, hence, less valuable.

Still, over the years, I've amassed some pretty good collectibles. I have documents signed by every president of the United States except for the current White House occupant. My favorite is a handwritten legal brief penned by Abraham Lincoln in 1855.

England is well represented in my collection in the form of a cut signature from Queen Victoria and a note signed by Charles Dickens in 1862 on stationery from his Gad's Hill Place home.

There's a lot of sports memorabilia; most notably boxing. I have an enormous amount of Muhammad Ali memorabilia and dozens of uncut tickets from major fights.

My favorite ticket is from the September 7, 1892, bout at the Olympic Club in New Orleans when James J. Corbett wrested the heavyweight championship from John L. Sullivan. The most valuable of my tickets would have gained admission to the July 3, 1905,

contest when Marvin Hart claimed the heavyweight throne by knocking out James Root.

I have uncut tickets from 11 fights when a new heavyweight champion was crowned. (Corbett, Hart, Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Ingemar Johansson, Sonny Liston, Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Riddick Bowe). Also, an uncut ticket from the night of October 4, 1940, (when Sugar Ray Robinson made his pro debut at Madison Square Garden on the undercard of Henry Armstrong vs. Fritzie Zivic) and the September 3, 1906, confrontation between Battling Nelson and Joe Gans in Goldfield, Nevada.

The July 4, 1910, "great white hope" fight between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries is in my collection, as are the two confrontations between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. Not to mention oddities like a Christmas card signed by both Don King and Bob Arum. How many of those do you think are around?

But one piece has a special place in my heart.

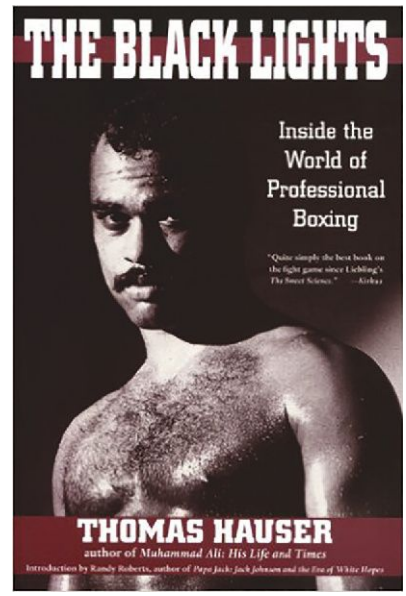
In the mid-1980s, I authored a book about the sweet science entitled "The Black Lights." The book explored the sport and business of boxing through the prism of WBC 140-pound titleholder Billy Costello. After it was published, I asked Billy to inscribe it for me. He wrote, "To Tom, a great friend and pal, the best always, Bill Costello."

Thus, a new pursuit was born.

That was in 1985. Since then, I've brought the book to numerous boxing-related events and asked world champions to sign it. My criterion is simple: The signer must have held a recognized world sanctioning-body title. Currently the WBC, WBA, IBF, and WBO merit inclusion. To date, 176 champions have signed my copy of "The Black Lights." Some simply wrote their name. Others inscribed longer messages.

The signees include all-time greats like Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Larry Holmes, Archie Moore, Joey Maxim, Gene Fullmer, Carmen Basilio, Emile Griffith, Jake LaMotta, Joey Maxim, Ruben Olivares and Willie Pep.

Also, modern greats like Mike Tyson, Lennox Lewis, Evander Holyfield, Vitali Klitschko, Wladimir Klitschko, Sugar Ray Leonard,



Hauser will allow only sanctioning-body titleholders to sign his book.

Roberto Duran, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns, Julio Cesar Chavez, Alexis Arguello, Pernell Whitaker, Roy Jones, Manny Pacquiao, Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, Juan Manuel Marquez, Joe Calzaghe, Bernard Hopkins, Felix Trinidad, Miguel Cotto and Oscar De La Hoya.

Thirty-nine heavyweight champions (Jersey Joe Walcott, Floyd Patterson and Johansson among them) signed the book. The fact that I wrote a book that has been signed by 39 heavyweight titleholders is pretty cool. The fact that we live in an era when boxing is so fragmented that I've been able to meet 39 heavyweight champions isn't.

★ ★ ★

Like most fighters – great and unknown – Bernard Hopkins ended his career on a loss. In fact, he ended his career on two losses and won just four of nine fights during his final 6½ years as an active boxer.

That hardly makes Hopkins unique. Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson lost their final fights. Muhammad Ali lost his last two fights and three of his last four. Ray Leonard, Pernell Whitaker, Mike Tyson, Felix Trinidad and Bob Foster are among the ring greats who tacked losses onto their record in each of their last two bouts. Emile Griffith lost his last three.

Great fighters rarely retire too soon.

★ ★ ★

Veteran sportswriter Robert Lipsyte has covered his share of fights over the decades, starting with Cassius Clay vs. Sonny Liston in Miami Beach on February 25, 1964. Reflecting back on those years, Lipsyte recently observed, "One thing about covering boxing was that, if it was a major fight, you got to spend a few days in the training camp of the fighters, talking to them, talking to their handlers. And in the course of those days, it was very hard not to become emotionally invested with the fighters. In some cases, I loved every moment of the coverage until the bell for the first round. Then these two guys, who I had come to like in the last month, were now trying to give each other brain damage." RING

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – "A Hard World: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing" – was published recently by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

'THEY'RE JUST WORDS'

BERNARD HOPKINS DOESN'T APPROVE OF ANGEL GARCIA'S COMMENTS BUT SAYS ANYTHING GOES IN PRE-FIGHT HYPE

This is one in a series of columns by future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins, who gives us his thoughts on various subjects important to every boxer and fan. This issue: Don't take comments made during pre-fight hype too seriously.

Someone told me about Angel Garcia going off in Brooklyn as they were beginning the promotion for the Danny Garcia-Keith Thurman fight. There was a lot made of what Angel said. He used language that I hear every day, but you don't hear it that often onstage before a few hundred people like that. I heard a lot of media rip Angel for what he said.

Now I'll admit, there were times when I said things that I regret. I shouldn't have thrown down the Puerto Rican flag in the promotion leading up to the Felix Trinidad fight. I shouldn't have said some of the things that I did when I was getting ready to fight Joe Calzaghe.

But you have to understand that a lot of things said during a pre-fight buildup come from emotion. It's done to create a pre-fight edge. In sports, and especially boxing, trash-talking is like an art. You can say things that you know will stick and move forward. After the fight is over, most people forget what was said before the fight. Some things I know guys can't let go. I remember Joe Frazier telling me he was still angry about Muhammad Ali calling him a gorilla decades after they fought.

I know what pre-fight hype is and what it's all about. I know Angel and Danny Garcia. They're Philly guys who I will always completely support.

What did Angel really do? He got people that might not even know about the fight to talk about the fight. That's really all that is. Trust me, after the fight is over, they'll hug and everything will be forgotten. What Angel does is scripted, I believe. Plus, Angel doesn't have to get into that ring and fight – Danny does. Angel is very good at deflecting things onto himself so his son doesn't have to deal with them.

What Angel said isn't even the harshest thing ever said when it comes to pre-fight hype. Back when Jack Johnson fought, that was real and meant to be hurtful. This is nothing but words put out there to agitate the other guy. I know. I was pretty good at that throughout much of my career. I knew what buttons to push. Angel is pretty good at that, too.

Pre-fight hype is open game, like deer hunting. Every once in a while you get a buck. This is a free country. Everyone is allowed to say what they want to say publicly. Angel and his team go by a script. Danny is going to be Danny, Angel is going to be Angel. That's never going to change.

I don't approve of the language and words Angel used. But today, that language is part of our vocabulary. I hear it every day. I hear it so much that it gets to a point where the effect is not as strong as it was 30, 40 years ago. It's wrong. It's very wrong. The "N-word" is said more than it has to be said. Angel took it out onstage openly. I'm more aware of those who say it quietly. Those are the kinds of people who are dangerous. Those are the people who will smile at you and when your back is turned treat you like dirt.

I'm not saying what Angel said is right, but you have to take it as part of his personality and part of his pre-fight hype personality. What I can tell you from my experience being around Angel Garcia, when it comes to his son, he has the attitude that you're going to war. There are no rules. You have to take the bitter with the sweet. This is warfare and you fight wars using any means necessary.

I've always had that attitude. If saying this and that gets to the other guy, I know I've done my job. It's why I say there are no rules when it comes to pre-fight hype. They're just words.

Hand trainer Angel Garcia a microphone at your own risk.

Could slick, young Terence Crawford ...

TERENCE CRAWFORD VS. MANNY PACQUIAO

... be too much for aging Manny Pacquiao?

THREE EXPERTS – A FIGHTER, A TRAINER AND A MEDIA MEMBER – TELL YOU HOW A MYTHICAL MATCHUP WOULD PLAY OUT

Old lion vs. young lion is one of the oldest stories in boxing. Think Rocky Marciano knocking Joe Louis out of the ring. Think Larry Holmes beating up Muhammad Ali. Think Terry Norris putting a whooping on Sugar Ray Leonard. Think Manny Pacquiao having his way with the remains of Oscar De La Hoya.

Time flies and now Pacquiao is the veteran on borrowed time and, as always, there is a brilliant young fighter waiting to feast on his carcass. Terence Crawford seemed to be almost unbeatable as a lightweight titleholder and he has looked even better at junior welterweight. The reigning RING, WBC and WBO champion barely loses rounds.

There is no evidence whatsoever that the legendary Pacquiao is a shot fighter. After all, he merited Fighter of the Year consideration based on decision victories over Tim Bradley and Jessie Vargas in 2016. Still, he is not what he was. At his best, Pacquiao would start as a clear favorite over Crawford, but the 38-year-old icon is at least six or seven years removed from his prime.

Both fighters are promoted by Top Rank, but would Pacquiao's brain trust risk such a dangerous assignment at this stage of his career?

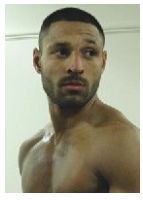
Three boxing experts offer their opinions on what is, for now, a hypothetical matchup.

TWITTER POLL: WHO WINS? CRAWFORD 65% ★ PACQUIAO 34% ★ DRAW 1%

CRAWFORD ★ TALE OF THE TAPE ★ PACQUIAO

147 POUNDS

CRAWFORD		PACQUIAO
29	AGE	38
30-0 (21 KOS)	RECORD	59-6-2 (38 KOS)
70.0	KO PERCENTAGE	56.7
ORTHODOX	STANCE	SOUTHPAW
5 FEET 8 INCHES (173 CM)	HEIGHT	5 FEET 5 INCHES (166 CM)
70 INCHES (178 CM)	REACH	67 INCHES (170 CM)



FIGHTER

KELL BROOK

IBF welterweight titleholder

Crawford should get more credit than he actually gets because he is one of the best fighters in the world today. He brings excitement, plenty of action, and when he hurts fighters, he finishes them. He's just a great all-rounder. Some fighters don't look fantastic when they move up in weight but Crawford has carried the extra pounds (up to junior welterweight) very well and he's continuing to turn in devastating performances. Pacquiao is still a very big name but he's not a young pup anymore. In 2017 he could get old overnight, but you never know; he still brings punches in bunches and a lot of energy. It is a very good matchup because both of them bring a lot to the table and it's a hard one to call. If I had to lean one way, I'd probably go with the guy who has more ambition and the fresher legs, so that's got to be Crawford. Pacquiao knows these young guys are targeting him and, even though he would fight absolutely anyone, it probably suits him to go after the other marquee names who are also getting older. He'll be looking for cash-out fights and I don't blame him after the career he's had.

PREDICTION: Crawford

TRAINER

RONNIE SHIELDS

Trainer of multiple world champions

Pacquiao knows the tricks of the trade and he's been in many big fights. He can show Crawford a lot of things that he's probably never seen before. Manny also knows how to create traps and that comes with experience. Crawford is very smart and one of the good things about him is that he can fight southpaw and orthodox. That's a rare thing, to find a guy who does equally well on both sides. Manny, to my knowledge, has never been in against an effective switch-hitter and that style will give him a lot of problems. A guy who's smart knows how to dissect strengths and weaknesses and Crawford has been doing that in all of his recent fights. I would love to have seen them go at in their primes but, truthfully, I would like to see Pacquiao retire now. He's got all his senses and that one last fight is the one that hurts you the most. A guy like Crawford, despite the fact that he's not a devastating puncher, hits you so many times that he can really damage you. That type of punishment hurts an older fighter. At this point, Crawford is younger and stronger and I really like him in the fight. This is how the torch gets passed.

PREDICTION: Crawford

MEDIA

RON BORGES

Boston Herald columnist and RING contributor

Manny brings experience and reputation that you have to respect if you're a younger fighter. If you're Terence Crawford, you can tell yourself and everyone else that you're the better fighter, but when you get in there, you're still looking across the ring at Manny Pacquiao. Pacquiao also retains a lot of his hand speed; not as much as he once did, and he's not as busy, but he's still faster than a lot of guys. Tim Bradley once told me that (Pacquiao is) a lot stronger than you think, too. Every time Crawford has been asked to step up and do something, he's done it and that cannot be ignored. People can say we don't know about this and we don't know about that, but what we do know is that he always finds a way to win. I like his power for a guy his size, he has more skills than many of the fighters I see today and he's more complete. Manny also has defensive deficiencies that Crawford could exploit. I hate to bet against youth, and I've done it before, but I won't do it this time. If it happens today, I pick Crawford.

PREDICTION: Crawford

The Canelo Alvarez-Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. announcement was a positive development for Oscar De La Hoya and Golden Boy Promotions.

A NOT-SO-GOLDEN MONTH

As new years go, 2017 didn't start out with a particularly happy January for **Golden Boy Promotions**.

First, as part of an ongoing anti-trust lawsuit against **Al Haymon**, the promotional company was required to expose its financial guts in order to demonstrate the alleged damage done by Haymon's **Premier Boxing Champions**. What some pugilistic soothsayers saw in those entrails, however, was a situation made fragile by more than just the perils of a free market. According to an analysis done by SB Nation blog Bloody Elbow, the documents showed a **Canelo Alvarez**-based economy in which the Mexican boxer was responsible for the vast majority of Golden Boy's profits. The revelation immediately threw fire on the widespread complaints of Canelo being protected from risky opponents like **Gennady Golovkin**. (On the other hand, it also gave a certain justification for the need to build that matchup to maximize revenue.)

Bloody Elbow's breakdown also demonstrated why Golden Boy was probably hoping for the $300 million lawsuit to end in a settlement. It didn't go that way. On January 26, a federal judge dismissed the case.

To top it off, Golden Boy president **Oscar De La Hoya** had been arrested for DUI in the wee hours of the previous day after being pulled over in Pasadena. It was pretty bad timing for his ongoing struggle with addiction to resurface.

A golden ray did break through the clouds mid-month, though – ironically on Friday the 13th – when it was announced that Canelo would face **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** in a mega-event that promised to be kind to the coffers of all involved. As a bonus, it even looked like a pretty good fight.

Meanwhile, **Richard Schaefer,** the former CEO of Golden Boy often accused of working with Haymon to steal most of De La Hoya's key fighters, announced the U.K. partnership between Ringstar Sports and heavyweight contender **David Haye's** Hayemaker Promotions. Displaying less flair for company-naming than boxing promotion, Schaefer called his new venture Hayemaker Ringstar.

Australia stepped into its own version of modern-media warfare on February 3 when a mechanic named **Darren Sharpe** decided to point his phone at the pay-per-view fight between Danny Green and Anthony Mundine and stream it for his broke mates on Facebook Live. Soon about 100,000 people were tuned in and cable provider Foxtel was knocking on Sharpe's door, legal threats in hand. The online public rose up in support of the Wi-Fi Robin Hood and Foxtel eventually decided to let him off in exchange for a public apology.

Another anti-establishment uprising took place in Mexico after **Zanfer Promotions** announced a March fight between **Juan Francisco Estrada** and **Edgar Sosa**. Fans had been itching to see the all-action Estrada in against a compelling challenger. The overmatched Sosa, they made it known loudly and clearly, would not cut it. To his credit, Zanfer chief Fernando Beltran withdrew the matchup and promised to find "a decent opponent for Estrada."

A jury in New York found in favor of heavyweight titleholder **Deontay Wilder** in his suit seeking $5 million in lost income for the canceled bout with **Alexander Povetkin**, who tested positive for meldonium in May. Povetkin's side has promised to appeal.

Dennis Hobson Sr., a veteran of a reported 1,000 bare-knuckle fights and father of British promoter **Dennis Hobson Jr.**, died of lung cancer at the age of 82 in mid-January. If all goes well, however, he'll live to fight again. After his vitals went flat, Dennis Sr.'s body was immediately put on ice in preparation for transport to Michigan, where he was due to be cryogenically frozen and hopefully revived when technology catches up. Dennis Jr. said he plans to join his dad upon his own death.

Ice was the enemy on January 28 in Montreal, where **Brandon Cook** had just TKO'd **Steven Butler** when he himself was floored by an ice bucket thrown from the angry crowd. Cook was taken to the hospital and later released while at least one man was charged with assault.

Another U.S. president left office without pardoning **Jack Johnson**, the black heavyweight champion who was arrested in 1913 after crossing state lines with a white woman whom he would later marry. **Sens. John McCain** and **Harry Reid** were among the latest to lobby on Johnson's behalf.

A modern member of the boxing community had more success with his American dream in mid-February: **Erislandy Lara**, who defected from Cuba in 2008, took the oath in Texas and became a U.S. citizen. Inspiring, isn't it? Truly a story from a different age, when oppressed refugees were welcomed and Russian-supported dictatorships were frowned upon.

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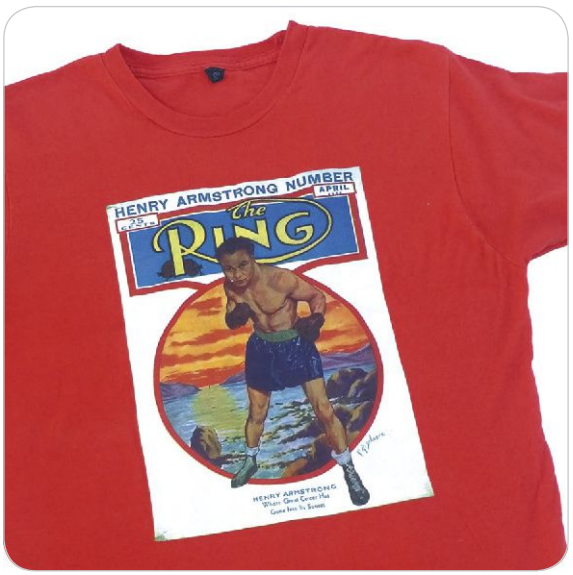

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FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

LEO SANTA CRUZ

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Leo Santa Cruz's performance in his rematch with Carl Frampton is easy to underappreciate because of its subtlety.

The quick, athletic Frampton outboxed his swarming rival in their first meeting, on July 30, emerging with a majority decision. Santa Cruz's first loss sent him back to the proverbial drawing board, where he would have to make adjustments if he hoped to win the second meeting.

The Los Angeles fighter obviously did his work. He was typically active in the January 28 rematch in Las Vegas, throwing 884 punches (compared to 1,002 in the first fight), but he altered his style in an effort to change his fortunes.

Santa Cruz outboxed the boxer, employing skills many of us didn't know he had. He used his reach advantage better than he did in the first fight, keeping his shorter opponent at the end of his long jab, and picked his power shots more judiciously to avoid taking unnecessary shots.

Frampton simply couldn't figure out how to get close enough to Santa Cruz to do damage. The Irishman landed only 133 punches in the fight, according to CompuBox. That's only 11 per round (compared to 19 per round for Santa Cruz).

Santa Cruz won by tight scores of 114-114, 115-113 and 115-113 – and had to rally to do it – but even the classy Frampton admitted afterward that Santa Cruz deserved the victory.

And just like that Santa Cruz, who seemed to have his limitations exposed in July, reclaimed any lost momentum and reasserted himself as one of the best fighters in the world. RING

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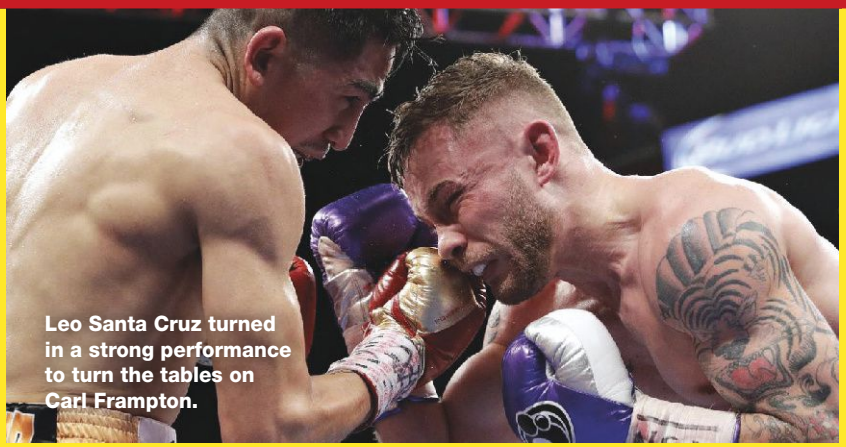


Leo Santa Cruz turned in a strong performance to turn the tables on Carl Frampton.

POUND FOR POUND: Carl Frampton (No. 10 last month) dropped off the list after losing his rematch with Leo Santa Cruz (unrated) by majority decision. Previous pound-for-pounder Naoya Inoue returned at No. 10 on the heels of a fresh victory over Kohei Kono.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Amid failed drug tests and failed negotiations that have left him inactive for over 15 months, Bermane Stiverne (No. 7 last month) was dropped and undefeated American "Big Baby" Jarrell Miller took the No. 10 spot.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: The February fight between Adrien Broner (No. 2 last month) and Adrian Granados (No. 4) was already supposed to take place at a 142-pound catchweight when Broner decided he needed the full welterweight limit to succeed at the scale. That, along with his failure to make weight in his previous fight, was enough to remove him from the list. Everyone else moved up a notch and Sweden's Anthony Yigit entered at No. 10.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Mikey Garcia (unrated last month) set the standard for comebacks with a frightening knockout of Dejan Zlaticanin (No. 1 at the time). Garcia took the top contender spot below champion Jorge Linares, pushing No. 10-rated Raymundo Beltran off the list. Zlaticanin slipped to No. 9

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Fans in Brooklyn may have witnessed a star-birth in Gervonta Davis. The Baltimore fighter crashed the ratings at No. 5 after stopping then-titleholder Jose Pedraza (No. 6 last month), who subsequently dropped out. Davis was then pushed to No. 6 after Mexican Miguel Berchelt brutally knocked out countryman Francisco Vargas (No. 2 last month) and entered at No. 4. Vargas fell to No. 8 and Tevin Farmer (No. 10 last month) was ejected.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Leo Santa Cruz moved from No. 4 to No. 1 and Carl Frampton went from No. 1 to No. 3 after their rematch in Las Vegas rightfully went in Santa Cruz's favor.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Unrated Kazakhstani underdog Zhanat Zhakiyanov produced an early Upset of the Year candidate by getting off the canvas twice in the first round to defeat titleholder Rau'shee Warren (No. 2 at the time) by a split decision. Zhakiyanov entered at No. 6 while Warren settled below him at No. 7. Venezuelan Liborio Solis (No. 10 last month) was pushed out in the process.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: Moruti Mthalane (No. 4 last month) last fought in December 2015 so he was let go due to inactivity. Undefeated Frenchman Vincent Legrand, who recently won the European title, took the vacancy at No. 10.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

James DeGale (right) and Badou Jack, the Nos. 1 and 2 super middleweights, settled nothing when they drew on January 14.

THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE: WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C TYSON FURY
261 • U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

1. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
613 • Ukraine • 64-4-0 (53 KOs)

2. DEONTAY WILDER
169 • U.S. • 37-0-0 (36 KOs)

3. KUBRAT PULEV
279 • Bulgaria • 24-1-0 (13 KOs)

4. LUIS ORTIZ
61 • Cuba • 27-0-0 (23 KOs)

5. ANTHONY JOSHUA
68 • U.K. • 18-0-0 (18 KOs)

6. JOSEPH PARKER
45 • New Zealand • 22-0-0 (18 KOs)

7. DAVID HAYE
40 • U.K. • 28-2-0 (26 KOs)

8. ANDY RUIZ JR.
37 • Mexico • 29-1-0 (19 KOs)

9. DILLIAN WHYTE
9 • U.K. • 20-1-0 (15 KOs)

10. JARRELL MILLER
1 • U.S. • 18-0-1 (16 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. OLEKSANDR USYK
72 • Ukraine • 11-0-0 (10 KOs)

2. MURAT GASSIEV
14 • Russia • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)

3. TONY BELLEW
39 • U.K. • 28-2-1 (18 KOs)

4. DENIS LEBEDEV
368 • Russia • 29-3-0 (22 KOs)

5. KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI
79 • Poland • 26-1-0 (16 KOs)

6. MARCO HUCK
258 • Germany • 40-3-1 (27 KOs)

7. MAIRIS BRIEDIS
51 • Latvia • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

8. FIRAT ARSLAN
224 • Germany • 38-8-2 (23 KOs)

9. ILUNGA MAKABU
188 • Congo • 19-2-0 (18 KOs)

10. YUNIER DORTICOS
39 • Cuba • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. ANDRE WARD
47 • U.S. • 31-0-0 (15 KOs)

2. SERGEY KOVALEV
213 • Russia • 30-1-1 (26 KOs)

3. ADONIS STEVENSON
193 • Canada • 28-1-0 (23 KOs)

4. ELEIDER ALVAREZ
153 • Colombia • 21-0-0 (10 KOs)

5. ARTUR BETERBIEV
114 • Russia • 11-0-0 (11 KOs)

6. JOE SMITH JR.
35 • U.S. • 23-1-0 (19 KOs)

7. NATHAN CLEVERLY
20 • U.K. • 30-3-0 (16 KOs)

8. OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK
13 • Ukraine • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)

9. SULLIVAN BARRERA
9 • Cuba • 18-1-0 (13 KOs)

10. VYACHESLAV SHABRANSKYY
61 • Ukraine • 17-1-0 (14 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. JAMES DEGALE
193 • U.K. • 23-1-1 (14 KOs)

2. BADOU JACK
95 • Sweden • 20-1-3 (12 KOs)

3. GILBERTO RAMIREZ
136 • Mexico • 34-0-0 (24 KOs)

4. GEORGE GROVES
271 • U.K. • 25-3-0 (18 KOs)

5. ANDRE DIRRELL
129 • U.S. • 25-2-0 (16 KOs)

6. CALLUM SMITH
89 • U.K. • 22-0-0 (17 KOs)

7. ANTHONY DIRRELL
131 • U.S. • 30-1-1 (24 KOs)

8. ARTHUR ABRAHAM
384 • Armenia • 45-5-0 (30 KOs)

9. FEDOR CHUDINOV
93 • Russia • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

10. TYRON ZEUGE
14 • Germany • 19-0-1 (11 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C CANELO ALVAREZ
65 • Mexico • 48-1-1 (34 KOs)

1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
271 • Kaz. • 36-0-0 (33 KOs)

2. DANIEL JACOBS
114 • U.S. • 32-1-0 (29 KOs)

3. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
116 • U.K. • 24-0-0 (12 KOs)

4. DAVID LEMIEUX
90 • Canada • 36-3-0 (32 KOs)

5. ANDY LEE
114 • Ireland • 34-3-1 (24 KOs)

6. CHRIS EUBANK JR.
97 • U.K. • 24-1-0 (19 KOs)

7. HASSAN N'DAM
161 • Cameroon • 35-2-0 (21 KOs)

8. AVTANDIL KHURTSIDZE
50 • Georgia • 32-2-2 (21 KOs)

9. MACIEJ SULECKI
33 • Poland • 23-0-0 (8 KOs)

10. RYOTA MURATA
7 • Japan • 12-0-0 (9 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. CANELO ALVAREZ
22 • Mexico • 48-1-1 (34 KOs)

2. JERMALL CHARLO
140 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (19 KOs)

3. ERISLANDY LARA
294 • Cuba • 24-2-2 (14 KOs)

4. MIGUEL COTTO
65 • P.R. • 40-5-0 (33 KOs)

5. JERMELL CHARLO
171 • U.S. • 28-0-0 (13 KOs)

6. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
70 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

7. AUSTIN TROUT
246 • U.S. • 30-3-0 (17 KOs)

8. LIAM SMITH
75 • U.K. • 23-1-1 (13 KOs)

9. JARRETT HURD
14 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)

10. MICHEL SORO
9 • France • 29-1-1 (19 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KELL BROOK
304 • U.K. • 36-1-0 (25 KOs)

2. KEITH THURMAN
206 • U.S. • 27-0-0 (22 KOs)

3. SHAWN PORTER
167 • U.S. • 26-2-1 (16 KOs)

4. MANNY PACQUIAO
15 • Phil. • 59-6-2 (38 KOs)

5. TIM BRADLEY
245 • U.S. • 33-2-1 (13 KOs)

6. AMIR KHAN
146 • U.K. • 31-4-0 (19 KOs)

7. DANNY GARCIA
81 • U.S. • 33-0-0 (19 KOs)

8. ERROL SPENCE
72 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

9. JESSIE VARGAS
50 • U.S. • 27-2-0 (10 KOs)

10. KONSTANTIN PONOMAREV
45 • Ukraine • 31-0-0 (13 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C TERENCE CRAWFORD
96 • U.S. • 30-0-0 (21 KOs)

1. VIKTOR POSTOL
183 • Ukraine • 28-1-0 (12 KOs)

2. ANTONIO OROZCO
72 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)

3. ADRIAN GRANADOS
50 • U.S. • 18-4-2 (12 KOs)

4. RICKY BURNS
38 • U.K. • 41-5-1 (14 KOs)

5. REGIS PROGRAIS
30 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

6. JULIUS INDONGO
11 • Namibia • 21-0-0 (11 KOs)

7. JACK CATTERALL
47 • U.K. • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)

8. EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
64 • Russia • 25-1-0 (22 KOs)

9. SERGEY LIPINETS
10 • Russia • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)

10. ANTHONY YIGIT
1 • Sweden • 19-0-1 (7 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C JORGE LINARES
154 • Venezuela • 41-3-0 (27 KOs)

1. MIKEY GARCIA
3 • U.S. • 36-0-0 (30 KOs)

2. TERRY FLANAGAN
71 • U.K. • 32-0-0 (13 KOs)

3. ROBERT EASTER
46 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)

4. ANTHONY CROLLA
69 • U.K. • 31-5-3 (13 KOs)

5. DENIS SHAFIKOV
97 • Russia • 38-2-1 (20 KOs)

6. SHARIF BOGERE
120 • Uganda • 29-1-0 (20 KOs)

7. RICHARD COMMEY
90 • Ghana • 24-2-0 (22 KOs)

8. FELIX VERDEJO
44 • Puerto Rico • 23-0-0 (15 KOs)

9. DEJAN ZLATICANIN
97 • Montenegro • 22-1-0 (15 KOs)

10. PETR PETROV
21 • Russia • 38-4-2 (19 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. VASYL LOMACHENKO
36 • Ukraine • 7-1-0 (5 KOs)

2. ORLANDO SALIDO
126 • Mexico • 43-13-4 (30 KOs)

3. JEZREEL CORRALES
42 • Panama • 21-1-0 (8 KOs)

4. MIGUEL BERCHELT
3 • Mexico • 31-1-0 (28 KOs)

5. TAKASHI MIURA
202 • Japan • 31-3-2 (24 KOs)

6. GERVONTA DAVIS
5 • U.S. • 17-0-0 (16 KOs)

7. TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
372 • Japan • 24-2-1 (20 KOs)

8. FRANCISCO VARGAS
136 • Mexico • 23-1-2 (17 KOs)

9. ROMAN MARTINEZ
441 • P.R. • 29-3-3 (17 KOs)

10. JASON SOSA
34 • U.S. • 20-1-4 (15 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. LEO SANTA CRUZ
77 • U.S. • 33-1-1 (18 KOs)

2. GARY RUSSELL JR.
99 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)

3. CARL FRAMPTON
29 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (14 KOs)

4. LEE SELBY
153 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (8 KOs)

5. ABNER MARES
198 • Mexico • 30-2-1 (15 KOs)

6. SIMPIWE VETYEKA
167 • S. Africa • 29-3-0 (17 KOs)

7. OSCAR VALDEZ
45 • Mexico • 21-0-0 (19 KOs)

8. JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
47 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (13 KOs)

9. JESUS CUELLAR
123 • Argentina • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

10. JORGE LARA
19 • Mexico • 28-0-2 (20 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
328 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

2. JESSIE MAGDALENO
88 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)

3. GENESIS SERVANIA
153 • Phil. • 28-0-0 (11 KOs)

4. REY VARGAS
114 • Mexico • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)

5. NONITO DONAIRE
99 • Phil. • 37-4-0 (24 KOs)

6. MOISES FLORES
32 • Mexico • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)

7. DIEGO DE LA HOYA
29 • Mexico • 16-0-0 (9 KOs)

8. HUGO RUIZ
10 • Mexico • 36-4-0 (32 KOs)

9. YUKINORI OGUNI
7 • Japan • 19-1-1 (7 KOs)

10. JONATHAN GUZMAN
30 • Dom. Rep. • 22-1-0 (22 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING'S Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his champion weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

RING RATINGS

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
276 • Japan • 26-0-2 (18 KOs)

1. JAMIE MCDONNELL
198 • U.K. • 29-2-1 (13 KOs)

2. JUAN CARLOS PAYANO
125 • Dom. Rep. • 18-1-0 (9 KOs)

3. LEE HASKINS
88 • U.K. • 34-3-0 (14 KOs)

4. ANSELMO MORENO
464 • Panama • 36-5-1 (12 KOs)

5. MARLON TAPALES
61 • Phil. • 29-2-0 (12 KOs)

6. ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV
1 • Kaz. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

7. RAU'SHEE WARREN
34 • U.S. • 14-2-0 (4 KOs)

8. TOMOKI KAMEDA
185 • Japan • 32-2-0 (20 KOs)

9. ZOLANI TETE
49 • S. Africa • 24-3-0 (20 KOs)

10. LUIS NERY
29 • Mexico • 22-0-0 (16 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. NAOYA INOUE
111 • Japan • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)

2. ROMAN GONZALEZ
23 • Nicaragua • 46-0-0 (38 KOs)

3. CARLOS CUADRAS
247 • Mexico • 35-1-1 (27 KOs)

4. SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI
198 • Thailand • 41-4-1 (38 KOs)

5. JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA
19 • Mexico • 34-2-0 (24 KOs)

6. KHALID YAFAI
49 • U.K. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)

7. LUIS CONCEPCION
74 • Panama • 35-5-0 (24 KOs)

8. JERWIN ANCAJAS
24 • Phil. • 26-1-1 (17 KOs)

9. MCJOE ARROYO
140 • P.R. • 17-1-0 (8 KOs)

10. KOHEI KONO
70 • Japan • 32-10-1 (13 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KAZUTO IOKA
127 • Japan • 21-1-0 (13 KOs)

2. JOHNRIEL CASIMERO
71 • Phil. • 23-3-0 (15 KOs)

3. DONNIE NIETES
21 • Phil. • 39-1-4 (22 KOs)

4. AMNAT RUENROENG
145 • Thailand • 17-1-0 (5 KOs)

5. JUAN CARLOS REVECO
281 • Argentina • 37-3-0 (19 KOs)

6. MCWILLIAMS ARROYO
128 • P.R. • 16-3-0 (14 KOs)

7. NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI
86 • Thailand • 36-0-0 (28 KOs)

8. ZOU SHIMING
15 • China • 9-1-0 (2 KOs)

9. DAIGO HIGA
20 • Japan • 12-0-0 (12 KOs)

10. VINCENT LEGRAND
1 • France • 24-0-0 (14 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. PEDRO GUEVARA
203 • Mexico • 29-2-1 (17 KOs)

2. AKIRA YAEGASHI
59 • Japan • 25-5-0 (13 KOs)

3. GANIGAN LOPEZ
50 • Mexico • 28-6-0 (17 KOs)

4. KOSEI TANAKA
7 • Japan • 8-0-0 (5 KOs)

5. RYOICHI TAGUCHI
114 • Japan • 25-2-2 (11 KOs)

6. CARLOS CANIZALES
7 • Venezuela • 16-0-1 (13 KOs)

7. RANDY PETALCORIN
145 • Phil. • 25-2-1 (18 KOs)

8. MILAN MELINDO
118 • Phil. • 35-2-0 (12 KOs)

9. HEKKIE BUDLER
17 • S. Africa • 31-2-0 (10 KOs)

10. KEN SHIRO
12 • Japan • 9-0-0 (5 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. WANHENG MENAYOTHIN
296 • Thailand • 45-0-0 (17 KOs)

2. KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART
124 • Thailand • 14-0-0 (6 KOs)

3. BYRON ROJAS
48 • Nicaragua • 18-3-3 (8 KOs)

4. JOSE ARGUMEDO
59 • Mexico • 19-3-1 (11 KOs)

5. KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA
203 • Japan • 31-8-0 (12 KOs)

6. CARLOS BUITRAGO
227 • Nicaragua • 30-2-1 (17 KOs)

7. RIKU KANO
38 • Japan • 11-2-1 (6 KOs)

8. SIMPHIWE KHONCO
17 • S. Africa • 17-5-0 (7 KOs)

9. SAUL JUAREZ
32 • Mexico • 23-5-1 (12 KOs)

10. RYUYA YAMANAKA
14 • Japan • 13-2-0 (3 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. ROMAN GONZALEZ
141 • Nicaragua • 46-0-0 (38 KOs)

2. ANDRE WARD
75 • U.S. • 31-0-0 (15 KOs)

3. SERGEY KOVALEV
101 • Russia • 30-1-1 (26 KOs)

4. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
105 • Kazakhstan • 36-0-0 (33 KOs)

5. TERENCE CRAWFORD
94 • U.S. • 30-0-0 (21 KOs)

6. VASYL LOMACHENKO
36 • Ukraine • 7-1-0 (5 KO)

7. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
182 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

8. CANELO ALVAREZ
65 • Mexico • 48-1-1 (34 KOs)

9. SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
92 • Japan • 26-0-2 (18 KOs)

10. NAOYA INOUE
3 • Japan • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)

THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

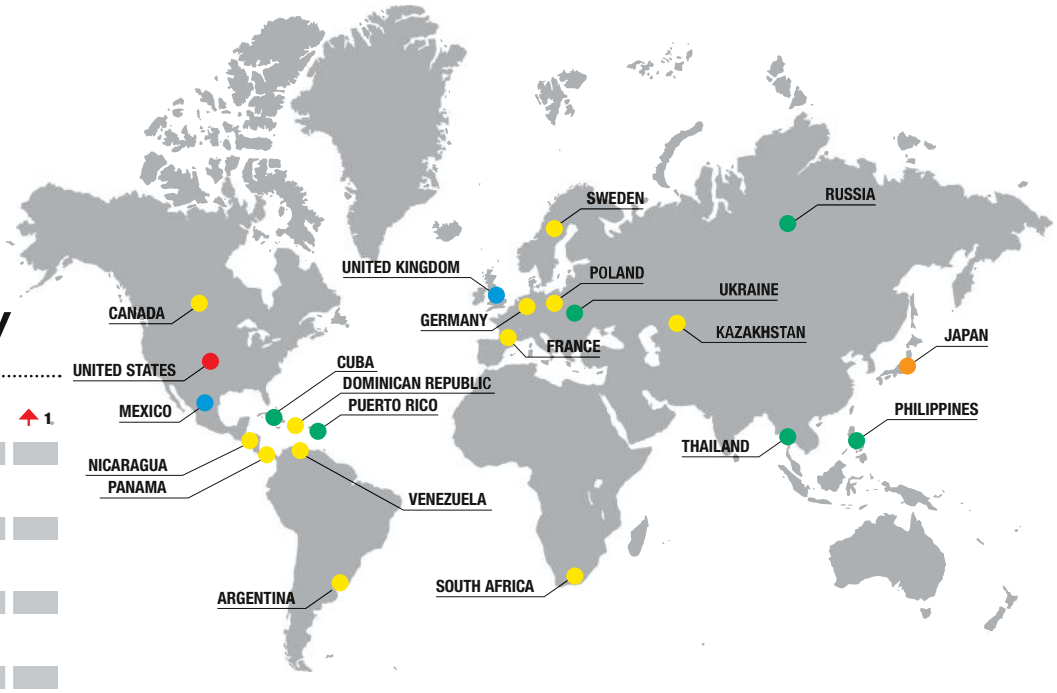
In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY



UNITED STATES	31	↑ 1
UNITED KINGDOM	23	
MEXICO	21	
JAPAN	17	
PHILIPPINES	9	
RUSSIA	9	
UKRAINE	7	
CUBA	5	
PUERTO RICO	5	↓ 1
THAILAND	5	
SOUTH AFRICA	4	↓ 1
GERMANY	3	
NICARAGUA	3	
PANAMA	3	
ARGENTINA	2	
CANADA	2	↓ 1
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2	
FRANCE	2	↑ 1
KAZAKHSTAN	2	↑ 1
POLAND	2	
SWEDEN	2	↑ 1
VENEZUELA	2	↓ 1
ARMENIA	1	
BULGARIA	1	
CAMEROON	1	
CHINA	1	
COLOMBIA	1	
CONGO	1	
GEORGIA	1	
GHANA	1	
IRELAND	1	
LATVIA	1	
MONTENEGRO	1	
NAMIBIA	1	
NEW ZEALAND	1	
UGANDA	1	

Countries out (from last month): *None*
• Countries in: *None*

ORTHODOX VS. SOUTHPAW

A surprising 49 of 175 boxers rated by THE RING fight left-handed, which is 28 percent. Roughly 10 percent of people in society in general are southpaws, according to numerous sources. Here is how righties and lefties compare by division.

DIVISION	ORTHODOX	SOUTHPAW
HEAVYWEIGHTS	10	1
CRUISERWEIGHTS	5	5
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	9	1
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	7	3
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	9	2
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS	7	3
WELTERWEIGHTS	8	2
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS	7	4
LIGHTWEIGHTS	8	3
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS	6	4
FEATHERWEIGHTS	6	4
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS	8	2
BANTAMWEIGHTS	3	8
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS	7	3
FLYWEIGHTS	9	1
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS	8	2
STRAWWEIGHTS	9	1
TOTAL	126	49

Note: *Canelo Alvarez is included twice here because he is rated in two divisions.*

KO KINGS

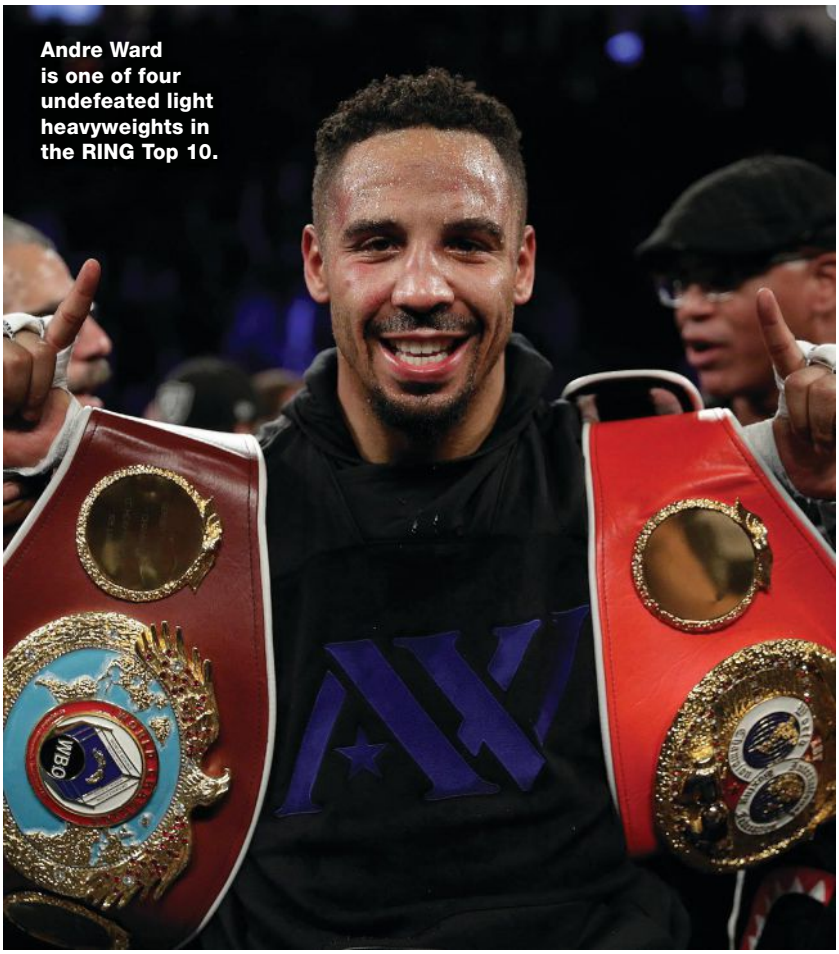
Wladimir Klitschko leads all RING-rated fighters with 53 knockouts in his two-decade career, 15 more than No. 2 on the list. Here are the RING-rated fighters with at least 30 KOs:

53 WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO, heavyweight
38 ROMAN GONZALEZ, junior bantamweight
38 MANNY PACQUIAO, welterweight
38 SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI, junior bantamweight
36 DEONTAY WILDER, heavyweight
34 CANELO ALVAREZ, junior middleweight/middleweight
33 MIGUEL COTTO, junior middleweight
33 GENNADY GOLOVKIN, middleweight
32 DAVID LEMIEUX, middleweight
32 HUGO RUIZ, junior featherweight
30 ARTHUR ABRAHAM, super middleweight
30 MIKEY GARCIA, lightweight
30 ORLANDO SALIDO, junior lightweight

FOCUS ON . . .

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 175-pounders.



Andre Ward is one of four undefeated light heavyweights in the RING Top 10.

MOST WEEKS RATED: SERGEY KOVALEV **213**

FEWEST WEEKS RATED: SULLIVAN BARRERA **9**

OLDEST: ADONIS STEVENSON **39**

YOUNGEST: JOE SMITH JR. **27**

MOST FIGHTS: NATHAN CLEVERLY **33**

FEWEST FIGHTS: ARTUR BETERBIEV **11**

HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: ELEIDER ALVAREZ, BETERBIEV, OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK, ANDRE WARD **100 PERCENT**

LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: CLEVERLY **90.9 PERCENT**

MOST KOS: KOVALEV **26**

FEWEST KOS: ALVAREZ, GVOZDYK **10**

LONGEST CURRENT WINNING STREAK: WARD **31 FIGHTS**

ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST: WARD **(NO. 2),** KOVALEV **(NO. 3)**

TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10: STEVENSON **(WBC),** WARD **(IBF, WBA, WBO)**

ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): DOMINIC BOESEL, MARCUS BROWNE, ANDRZEJ FONFARA, UMAR SALAMOV, ERIK SKOGLUND

OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: ANDRE WARD
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: TERENCE CRAWFORD
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
BANTAMWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ
FLYWEIGHT: KAZUTO IOKA

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FEATHERWEIGHT: LEO SANTA CRUZ
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
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MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: LEO SANTA CRUZ
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: KAZUTO IOKA

Note: *This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*

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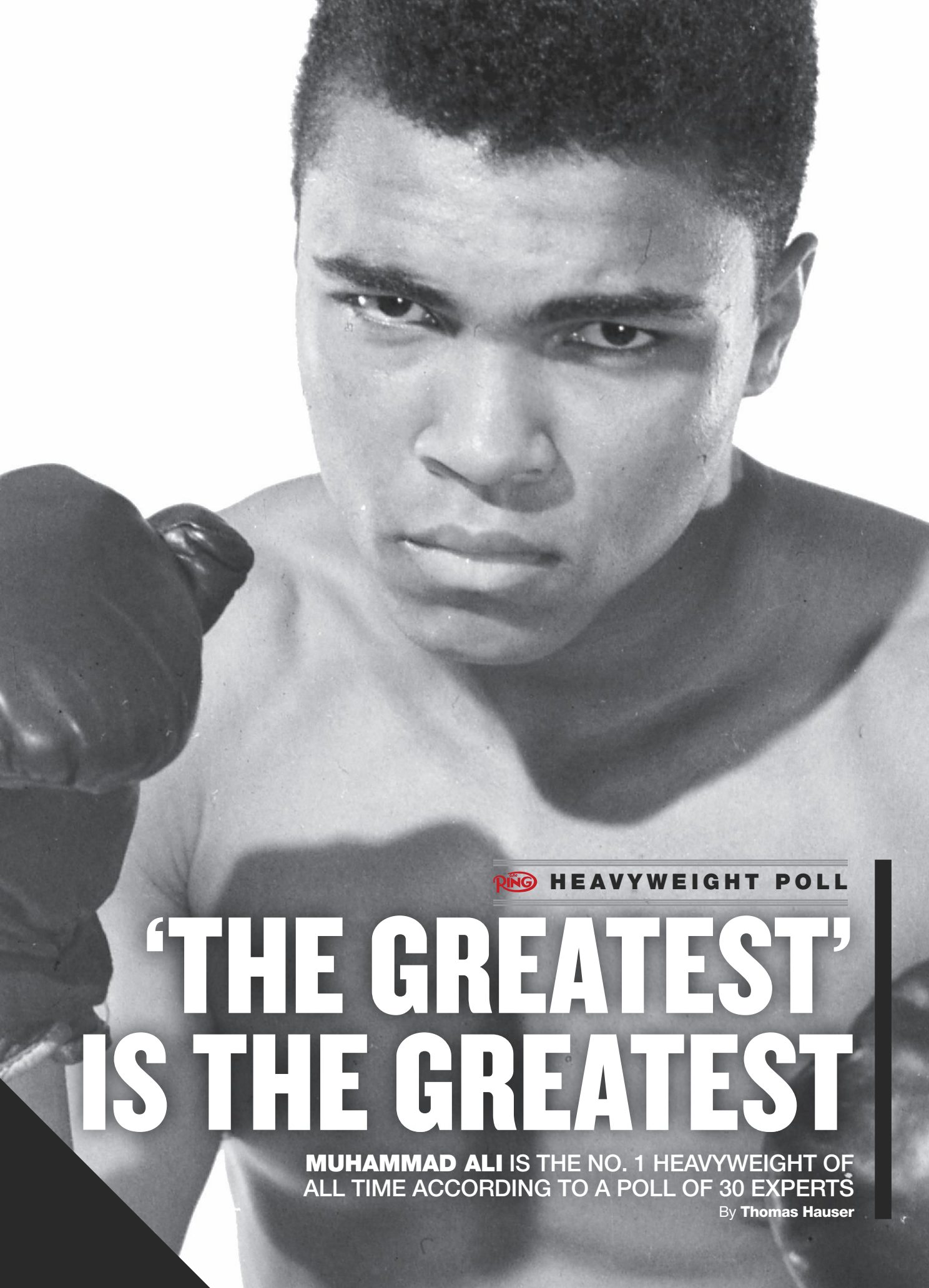
Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas

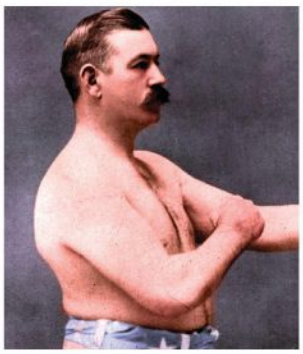
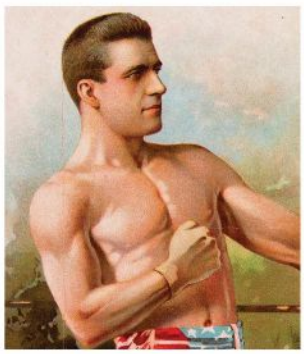


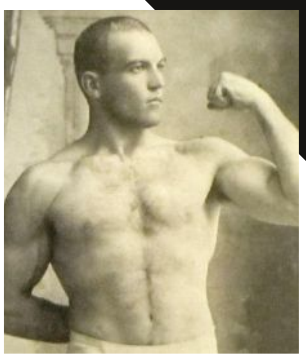
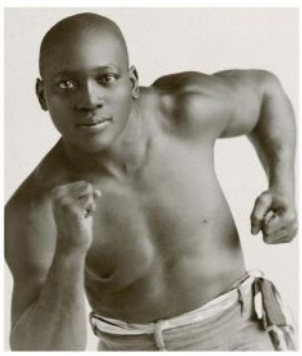
RING HEAVYWEIGHT POLL

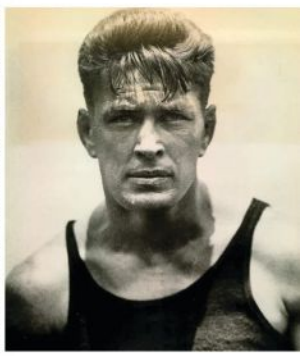
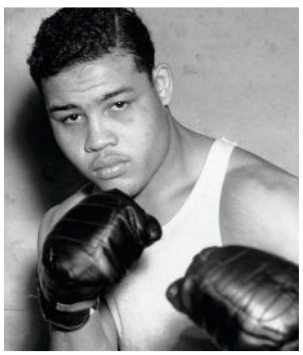
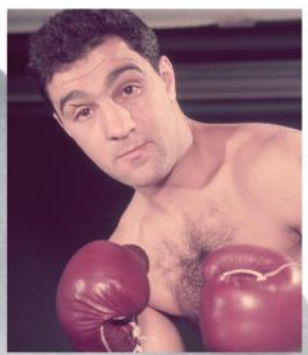
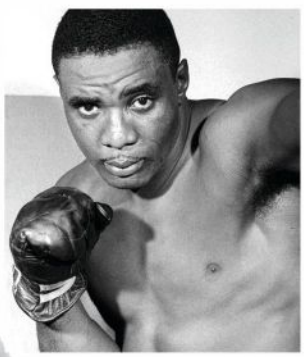
'THE GREATEST' IS THE GREATEST

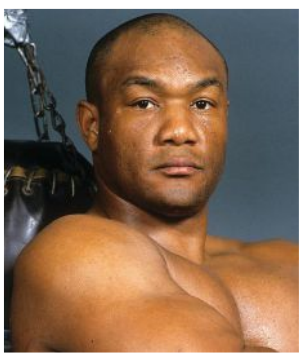
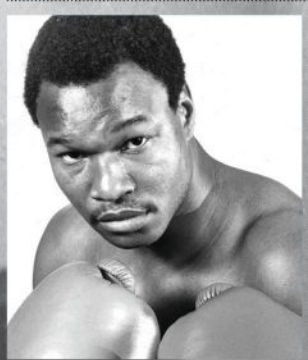
MUHAMMAD ALI IS THE NO. 1 HEAVYWEIGHT OF ALL TIME ACCORDING TO A POLL OF 30 EXPERTS

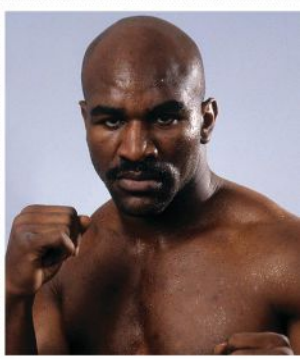
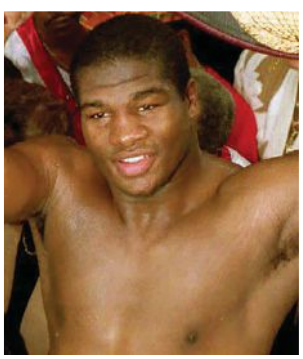
By **Thomas Hauser**

Top row, John L. Sulllivan, James Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons, James Jeffries. Second row, Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, Joe Louis. Third row, Rocky Marciano, Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, George Foreman. Fourth row, Larry Holmes, Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Riddick Bowe. Fifth row, Lennox Lewis, Vitali Klitschko, Wladimir Klitschko.

In the past, I've overseen fantasy round-robin tournaments in various weight divisions that matched great fighters from different eras against each other with the results of each fight being predicted by a panel of boxing industry experts.

The heavyweight division doesn't lend itself to this format. The size differential between fighters from different eras is too great. To draw an analogy to another sport, some of pro football's greatest lineman from the past weighed 240 pounds. They'd be thrown around like rag dolls today. But they were great.

Also, previous polls in this series were limited to fighters from boxing's modern age (roughly 1940 to date). That's because there wasn't enough film footage of fighters from earlier eras to properly evaluate how they'd perform against one another and also because boxing technique has evolved considerably since the days of Joe Gans.

To offer another analogy: Babe Ruth is widely regarded as the greatest baseball player who ever lived and, with the possible exception of Ted Williams, baseball's greatest hitter. But if Ruth had been forced to contend with sliders, cutters, screwballs, forkballs, two-seam fastballs, four-seam fastballs and the like, he might have been less dominating.

This heavyweight poll has different criteria from previous exercises. Rather than match champions against each other in a round-robin tournament, the electors were asked to rank them in order of greatness. This is more than who would have beaten who. Other considerations are involved.

The poll evaluated 20 champions dating back to the dawn of gloved heavyweight championship fights. The fighters, listed chronologically, are John L. Sulllivan, James Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons, James Jeffries, Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Sonny Liston, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Larry Holmes, Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Riddick Bowe, Lennox Lewis, Vitali Klitschko and Wladimir Klitschko.

Great is a hard word to define, and greatness is subjective. It was up to each panelist to quantify greatness.

A fighter's skill level is important. But so too is that fighter's skill level within the context of his time.

How great was each fighter within his era? Was he the best of his era? Dominant in his era? How many other great heavyweights fought in his era? Great rivalries make great fighters. Did he fight the other great heavyweights of his time? Which elite fighters who were in their prime did he beat? One fight can go a long way toward defining a fighter's legacy.

A great fighter needs great competition. That doesn't necessarily translate into a pristine record.

There was an inclination on the part of the panelists to make pound-for-pound comparisons, thereby elevating fighters like Dempsey and Marciano above today's much larger champions.

Some fighters were more feared than others. Opponents went into the ring against Louis, Liston and Tyson in their prime fearing for their lives.

And the panelists factored in toughness. Some of the fighters on this list had a bit of quit in them. In the eyes of several electors, that was where Tyson came up short.

And then there are fighters like Ali, Frazier, Holmes, Holyfield and Marciano. You could have shot those guys 10 times with a gun, posits one panelist, and they still wouldn't have quit.

In weighing greatness, the electors also considered intangibles and how important the heavyweight championship of the world was, once upon a time.

Heavyweight champions have resonated in the culture. In that regard, Lennox Lewis (one of the panelists and also one of the champions being evaluated) observes, "A champion's contribution to the sport is more than how great a fighter he was. It's also about what he did outside the ring and what we're left remembering about him."

Each generation wants its own great heavyweight champion. Some generations have him. Some don't. How important was a fighter in his era? What impact did he have on his time?

To what extent does the mythology that enshrouds a fighter factor into his greatness?

Tyson foreshadowed today's social media world where fame often counts for more than character. Thirty years after Tyson ascended to the heavyweight throne, a Google search for "Mike Tyson" reveals 8,590,00 results. A similar search for "Joe Louis" turns up 432,000. For some electors, the magnitude of a fighter's fame was worthy of consideration. For others, it wasn't.

For some, character mattered. But one panelist opined, "For what we're doing now, I don't care that Joe Louis was a better citizen than Sonny Liston."

In sum, the criteria diverged significantly from elector to elector. But lurking in the back of many minds was the question: Which of these fighters took boxing to a new level in terms of skills, societal importance, or both?

THE 30 PANELISTS

Trainers: Teddy Atlas, Pat Burns, Virgil Hunter and Don Turner.

Matchmakers: Eric Bottjer, Don Chargin, Don Elbaum, Bobby Goodman, Ron Katz, Mike Marchionte, Russell Peltz and Bruce Trampler.

Media: Al Bernstein, Ron Borges, Gareth A Davies, Norm Frauenheim,

Jerry Izenberg, Harold Lederman, Paulie Malignaggi, Dan Rafael and Michael Rosenthal

Historians: Craig Hamilton, Steve Lott, Don McRae, Bob Mee, Clay Moyle, Adam Pollack and Randy Roberts.

Lewis and Tyson also participated in the poll. Neither fighter ranked himself. Instead, a weighted average from the other panelists was assigned to their respective slots on their ballots.

Several electors didn't feel comfortable rating Sullivan, Corbett, Fitzsimmons, Jeffries or Johnson because there's virtually no film footage of Johnson in action and none of the other four. Once again, a weighted average of the rankings from the other electors was used to fill the void.

One elector stated a preference for replacing Vitali Klitschko and Fitzsimmons on his list with Max Schmeling and Sam Langford. Klitschko and Fitzsimmons were assigned a position behind the other 18 fighters on his ballot.

A weighted average was also employed for Steve Lott with regard to Tyson because of their friendship and close working relationship during the glory years of Tyson's career.

In previous polls (which used the who-beats-who formula), most electors were confident in the choices. This time, a repeated refrain was, I could do this again tomorrow and, except for the top few guys on my list, I might have a different order.

But in the end, a consensus emerged.

If one of the fighters had been ranked No. 1 on all 30 ballots, he would have had a perfect score of 30. If a fighter was ranked No. 20 on each ballot, his score would have been 600.

Muhammad Ali's score was 46, which, when divided by the 30 electors, averages 1.53. That's Ali's power ranking, which put him in first place.

FINAL RANKINGS

	NAME	AVG. RANK	POINTS
1.	Muhammad Ali	1.53	46
2.	Joe Louis	2.00	60
3.	Jack Johnson	5.30	159
4.	Rocky Marciano	6.57	197
5.	Larry Holmes	7.23	217
6.	Jack Dempsey	7.67	230
7.	George Foreman	7.80	234
8.	Joe Frazier	9.70	291
9.	Mike Tyson	9.93	298
10.	Sonny Liston	10.10	303
11T.	Lennox Lewis	10.93	328
11T.	Evander Holyfield	10.93	328
13.	Gene Tunney	11.60	348
14.	John L. Sullivan	12.63	379
15.	James Jeffries	14.70	441
16.	Wladimir Klitschko	15.47	464
17.	Vitali Klitschko	15.67	470
18.	James Corbett	15.87	476
19.	Riddick Bowe	16.60	498
20.	Bob Fitzsimmons	17.77	533

Some of the margins that separated fighters were razor-thin. In one instance, there was no margin at all. Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield tied for 11th place with 328 points each.

Jack Dempsey (No. 6) edged out George Foreman (No. 7) by four points.

Joe Frazier (No. 8), Mike Tyson (No. 9) and Sonny Liston (No. 10) were separated by a total of 12 points. If the electors were asked to vote again, the order of these three might be different.

The same is true of Wladimir Klitschko (No. 16), Vitali Klitschko (No. 17), and James Corbett (No. 18), who were also separated by 12 points.

Nineteen of the 30 electors ranked Ali first. Nine chose Joe Louis. Two voted for Jack Johnson. Fourteen of the 19 electors who ranked Ali first ranked Louis second. Seven of the nine electors who ranked Louis first ranked Ali second.

One elector ranked Ali as low as fourth. One ranked Louis fifth.

As illustrated by the chart on the next page, Ali and Joe Louis were tied for first place in the ranking by trainers. Ali finished alone in first place in the rankings by media, matchmakers and historians. Louis finished second in these latter three categories. Johnson finished in third place in the minds of the media and historians. Marciano finished third among the trainers. Foreman finished third among the matchmakers.

FIGHTER	TRAINERS	MEDIA	MATCHMAKERS	HISTORIANS
Ali	1-T	1	1	1
Louis	1-T	2	2	2
Johnson	4	3	5	3
Marciano	3	5	4	4
Holmes	5	4	8	6
Dempsey	9-T	7	6	5
Foreman	7-T	6	3	8
Frazier	6	10	9-T	14-T
Tyson	12	12	9-T	7
Liston	7-T	11	7	12
Lewis	11	8-T	13	14-T
Holyfield	13	8-T	11	13
Tunney	T-9	13	14	10
Sullivan	15	15	12	9
Jeffries	14	19	19	11
W. Klitschko	18	14	16	18
V. Klitschko	17	16	15	19
Corbett	16	18	18	16
Bowe	19	17	17	20
Fitzsimmons	20	20	20	17

In some instances, the panelists offered commentary with regard to their rankings. We'll come back to Muhammad Ali and Joe Louis later. A composite of comments with regard to the other fighters follows.

NO. 3 JACK JOHNSON

Jack Johnson was ahead of his time in so many ways. He had advanced skills for his era. Impeccable defense. Underrated offense (he carried many opponents). He was the first heavyweight in history to truly master boxing.

Despite being black, Johnson refused to meet the best black contenders while he was champion. There was no interest from the American public in two black men fighting for the heavyweight title. But he'd already beaten most of these men on his rise to the championship.

What fighter today would get in the ring in front of tens of thousands of people who hated his guts and literally wanted to kill him, and talk trash to the guy he was fighting and beat him?

Jack Johnson was the father. He was black America's first black hero.

NO. 4 ROCKY MARCIANO

Nobody ever got more out of what he had as a fighter than Marciano. No one came into a fight in better shape than Marciano. He could punch. He could take a punch. He learned some rudimentary techniques to accentuate his physical gifts and compensate for his limitations. He was relentless and had a will of iron.

Consider the competition that Marciano beat. Walcott and Charles are derided now as old men when he fought them. But watch the film. They were great fighters who were nowhere near shot. Charles was 32 years old in the first Marciano fight. Walcott was 37, but he outboxed Marciano for most of their first match. Carmine Vingo, Rex Layne, Roland LaStarza; Marciano beat real fighters on his way up. He did lose (Ted Lowry was robbed in their first match). But when his character was tested, nobody was better. I loved his response when someone asked him what he was thinking when Walcott knocked him down in their first fight: Gee, this fellow hits hard. I might have to get up a couple of times before I knock him out.

Marciano wouldn't be rated as high as he is without his O. But he has the O and none of the other fighters on this list do. He'd be too small for guys like Ali and Foreman. But he took a better punch and was tougher than all of them.

NO. 5 LARRY HOLMES

Holmes did what he had to do to win. Getting off the floor the way he did against Earnie Shavers and Renaldo Snipes, coming back and knocking those guys out – that showed a special kind of greatness.

What a jab! Larry Holmes could knock you out with his jab.

NO. 6 JACK DEMPSEY

The Dempsey who fought Jess Willard was a stone-cold killer. He learned his craft and perfected his style over years of fighting. He wanted to end fights as quickly as possible. And his power was no myth. He changed the way guys fought.

Dempsey and Babe Ruth were America's two most important sports figures in the Roaring Twenties, when sports became an integral part of the culture. He was wildly popular. He brought a whole new audience to boxing. In a golden age of sports, he made boxing

popular and respectable.

NO. 7 GEORGE FOREMAN

A lot of people who are serious about boxing think George Foreman is one of the most underrated fighters ever. He fought his share of soft opponents. But he's also one of the toughest men to ever box (watch the Lyle and Moorer fights). He's one of the hardest hitters ever. And after being heavyweight champion, he came back more than a decade later to do it again.

Foreman was a much better boxer the second time around. He was older and slower, but he'd learned to study his opponents and take advantage of what he saw.

Ali fought Joe Frazier three times and Ken Norton three times. He didn't mess with Foreman again after he beat him.

NO. 8 JOE FRAZIER

On March 8, 1971, Joe Frazier could have competed with anybody.

Frazier, like Marciano, was pure fighter. But he lost some of his desire before he retired. And when your biggest asset is desire, that's not good.

Did some of Ali's greatness rub off on Joe? Absolutely. And some of Joe's greatness rubbed off on Ali.

NO. 9 MIKE TYSON

Tyson was the legitimate heavyweight champion of the world for more than three years. That's a long time in boxing. And he has captivated the public's imagination for three decades.

Mike Tyson is looked at now as a bully who folded when things got tough. But Tyson in his prime would have been competitive against anyone.

Tyson was the greatest six-round heavyweight of all time. But if he couldn't take an opponent out in six rounds, he started to fall apart.

When Mike Tyson got discouraged, he wasn't the same fighter. Joe Louis would have discouraged Tyson real fast. A lot of guys on this list would have discouraged Tyson real fast.

NO. 10 SONNY LISTON

Sonny Liston was the best heavyweight in the world for five years. His left hand – jab and hook – were beyond frightening. If he'd been allowed to fight for the championship when he deserved it, all those fights against Cleveland Williams, Eddie Machen and Zora Folley would have been successful title defenses.

If Cassius Clay hadn't come along, Liston would have had more time at the top.

Sonny Liston was the baddest man on the planet. Compared to Liston, Mike Tyson was a choirboy.

NO. 11 (tie) EVANDER HOLYFIELD

Holyfield, like Ali, fought everyone. He beat four other guys on this list: Tyson, Bowe, Holmes, and Foreman. Except for Bowe, they weren't in their prime when Evander beat them, but that's still an impressive accomplishment.

Holyfield was bigger than Dempsey and Marciano, but he couldn't punch like them. And when you're fighting, punching means a whole lot.

NO. 11 (tie) LENNOX LEWIS

Olympic champion. A giant who fought with finesse. He beat every available contender. He came back to beat the only two fighters who beat him in the pros. And this myth that Lennox had no chin. He got up from that bomb McCall hit him with, and I still think the fight was stopped prematurely. The punch Rahman hit him with in South Africa would have KO'd anyone, and there was the issue of altitude in South Africa. Lewis corrected things with Rahman in the rematch.

Lennox carried himself with dignity and grace for his entire career. That should count for something.

NO. 13 GENE TUNNEY

Tunney is another fighter who learned his craft well over years. A better version of Corbett. But Tunney never fought a black man. He was the only heavyweight champion after Sullivan without a man of color on his record.

Tunney caught Dempsey at the end of Dempsey's career and after Dempsey had been out of the ring for three years. He was able to play the matador to an aging Jack Dempsey's bull. I doubt that he could have done that against Marciano. Marciano would have beaten Tunney down. In fact, a young Dempsey might have beaten Tunney down.

NO. 14 JOHN L. SULLIVAN

Sullivan was America's first mass-culture hero and the most idolized athlete who had lived up until his time. He stood out as a fighter the way Joe Louis did in his era.

Sullivan fought for 13 years, the last 10 of which he was a full-blown alcoholic. Drinking nearly killed him in 1888, yet he whipped the next-best (white) man a year later in a bare-knuckle match that lasted more than two hours. It took Corbett 21 modern rounds to stop Sullivan when Sullivan was 34 years old, had been inactive for three years and was drinking constantly. This to me is mind-boggling and tells me that Sullivan, in his prime, would have whipped Corbett.

NO. 15 JAMES JEFFRIES

Jeffries was a superior athlete who won the heavyweight championship as a virtual novice. That's quite an accomplishment.

Forget about Johnson-Jeffries as a measure of Jeffries as a fighter. It was enormously important as a social event. But as a fight, it was like Ali-Holmes. One guy was a once-great fighter who was shot. The other guy was a great fighter in his prime.

NO. 16 WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

We can't be too American-centric. Boxing is a world sport.

The Klitschkos are two big, well-conditioned guys fighting in an era when the best big guys are going into sports other than boxing.

Give Wladimir credit for staying the course.

Wladimir has never seemed to have his heart in it.

NO. 17 VITALI KLITSCHKO

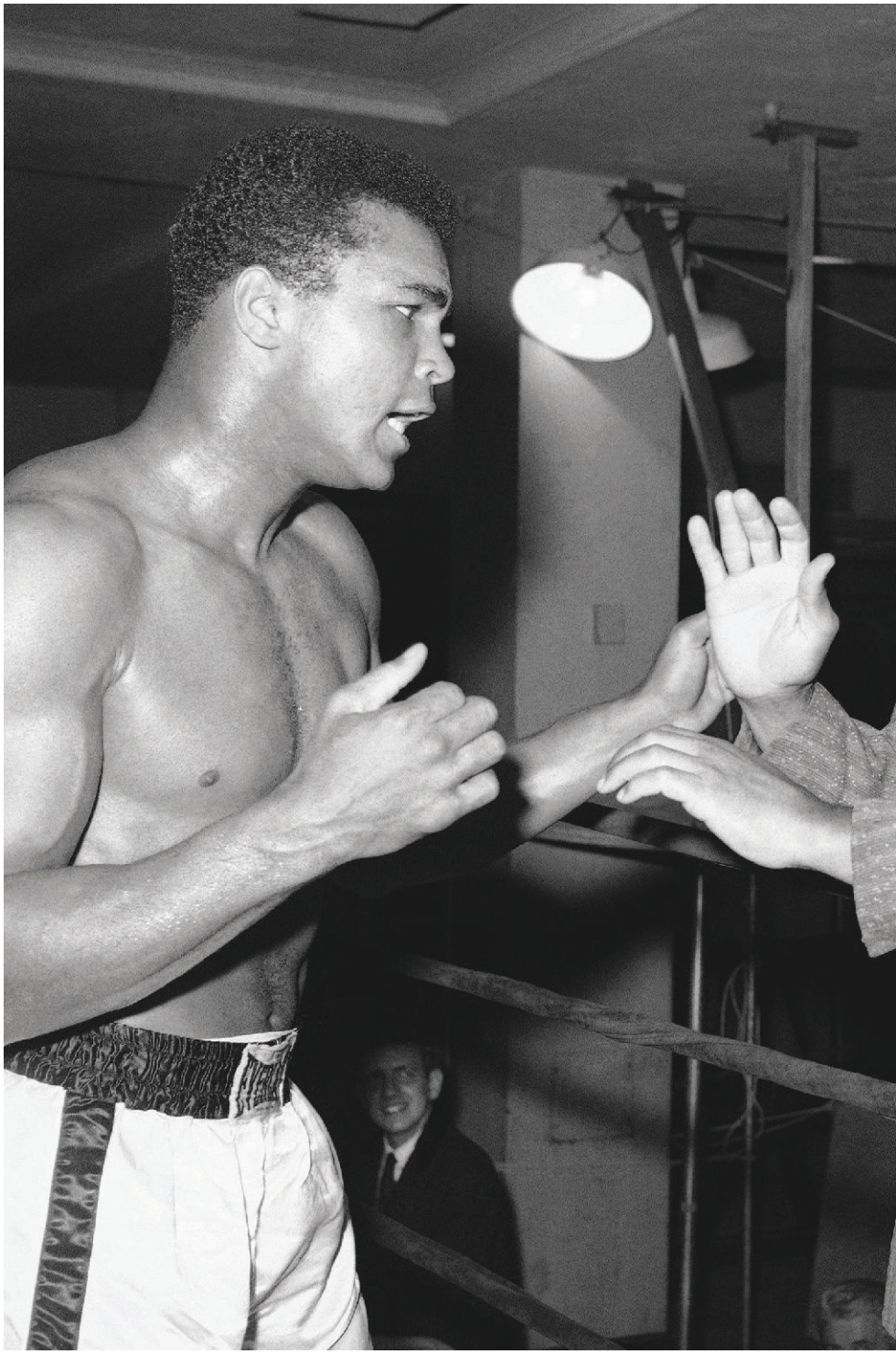
Vitali didn't have the resume or talent of his brother. But if they fought, I'd pick Vitali. And his role as a serious player in Ukrainian politics adds to his stature.

NO. 18 JAMES CORBETT

Corbett was one of the first successful scientific fighters of the gloved era. Give him credit for that. But he fought for 17 years and had only 18 fights. He beat an old drunk (John L. Sullivan) for the title, defended it once against an aging British middleweight (Charlie Mitchell) and lost it to another aging British middleweight (Bob Fitzsimmons).

NO. 19 RIDDICK BOWE

Bowe was a super talent and a super waste. He had one great fight, the first fight against Evander Holyfield. Then he got lazy. Riddick had the potential to be much higher on this list but never got there. He was a disappointment. When you squander talent like that, you don't deserve to be ranked high.



NO. 20 BOB FITZSIMMONS

Bob Fitzsimmons won championships in three weight divisions. But he was getting his ass kicked in the Corbett fight until he hit Corbett with a body shot.

ALI AND LOUIS

All of the fighters on this list were great. But Muhammad Ali and Joe Louis stand separate and apart from the rest.

There's a fight that's bigger than boxing.

Certain champions touch an entire generation.

Muhammad Ali (left) and Joe Louis are generally considered the two best heavyweights in history.

Put symbolism aside for a moment. Joe Louis was a better fighter than any fighter the world had seen before. He was the best ever up until his time.

People remember how good Ali was when he was young. They've forgotten how good Louis was when he was young. Louis had everything. Power, speed, stamina, a textbook style. He lost one fight in the early years of his career, to a very good Max Schmeling (who Louis took lightly and didn't train for properly). When they met again with the championship on the line, Louis knocked Schmeling out in the first round.

That night changed the experience of being black in America. Jack Johnson might have been black America's first black hero. When Louis (the symbol of American democracy) knocked out Schmeling (Adolf Hitler's favorite fighter), Louis became white America's first black hero. In 1951, at the end of Louis's storied ring career, A.J. Liebling wrote, "Joe Louis looks like a champion and carries himself like a champion, and people will continue to call him champion as long as he lives."

Muhammad Ali had incredible physical gifts, skill, determination and heart. He fought more great heavyweights than anyone and never ducked a challenge. And let's not forget: Ali was past his prime when he beat Joe Frazier and George Foreman.

Ali wasn't always a good sportsman. Joe Frazier and Ernie Terrell can attest to that. But as David Halberstam noted, "He knew how to play the role of champion, inside and outside the ring. God, he knew how to play that role."

Like Louis, Ali changed what it meant to be black in America.

Louis inspired America. Ali inspired the world.

In the end, Ali's edge over Louis in this poll was that many electors felt he was simply the better fighter.

So, are we talking about boxing's greatest heavyweight fighter or boxing's greatest heavyweight champion?

As a symbol, Louis meant as much in his time as Ali did in his; maybe more.

My own preference is to rank Ali No. 1 and Louis No. 1A.

Given Ali's generosity of spirit, I don't think he'd mind sharing the No. 1 spot ... as long as he's the one without the A.

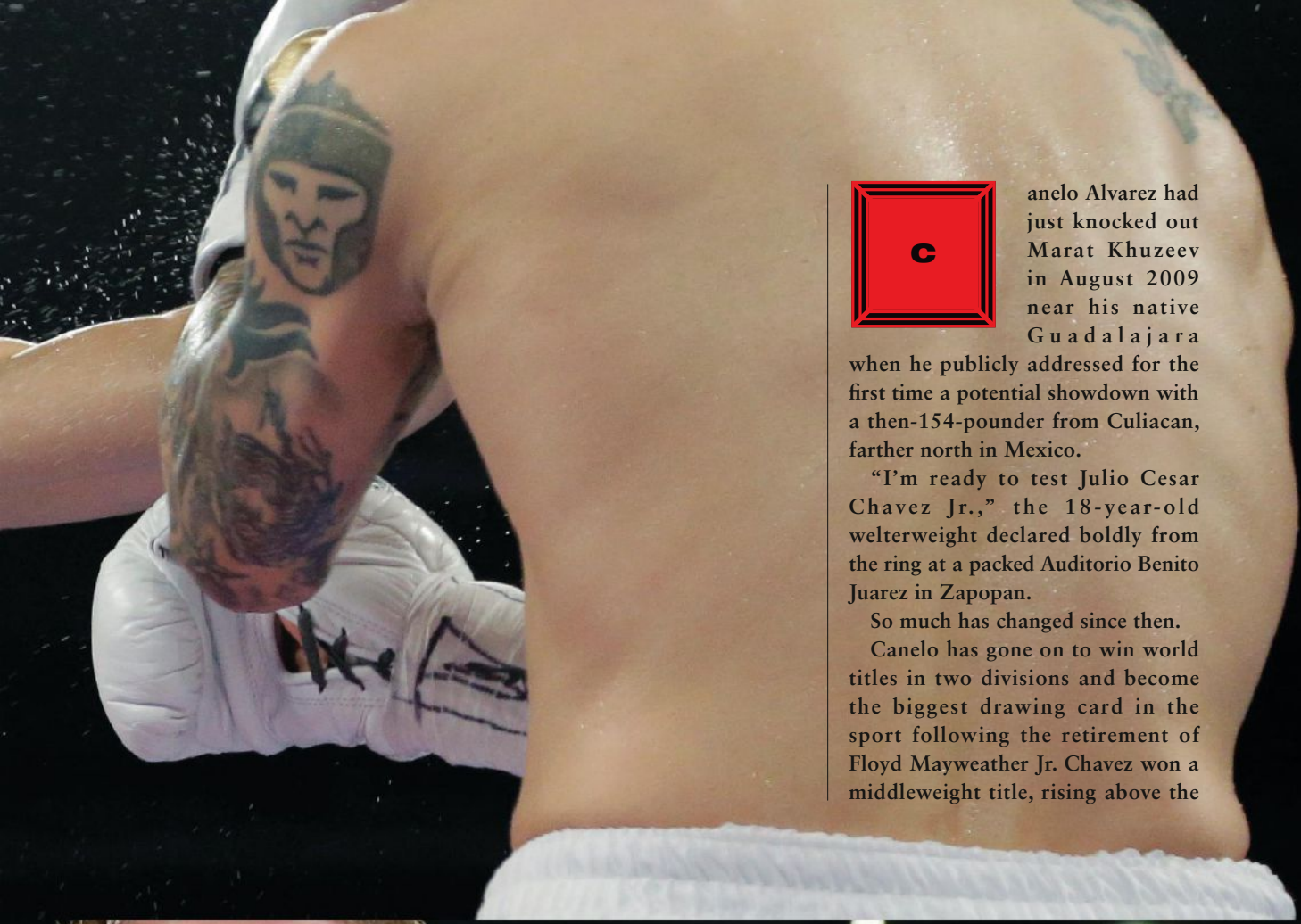
Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – "A Hard World: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing" – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

The matchup of Mexico's two biggest stars – Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. (top photo) and Canelo Alvarez – is an enormous event in that boxing-crazy country.

A NATURAL RIVALRY

CANELO ALVAREZ AND JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ JR. WERE DESTINED TO FIGHT ONE ANOTHER FROM THE BEGINNING

By **Michael Rosenthal**



Canelo Alvarez had just knocked out Marat Khuzeev in August 2009 near his native Guadalajara when he publicly addressed for the first time a potential showdown with a then-154-pounder from Culiacan, farther north in Mexico.

"I'm ready to test Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.," the 18-year-old welterweight declared boldly from the ring at a packed Auditorio Benito Juarez in Zapopan.

So much has changed since then.

Canelo has gone on to win world titles in two divisions and become the biggest drawing card in the sport following the retirement of Floyd Mayweather Jr. Chavez won a middleweight title, rising above the

THE DETAILS

Who: Canelo Alvarez vs. Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.
What: 12 rounds at a catchweight of 164.5 pounds
When: May 6
Where: T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas
TV: HBO Pay-Per-View
Records: Canelo (48-1-1, 34 KOs); Chavez (50-2-1, 32 KOs)
At stake: Alvarez must win the all-Mexican showdown in order to fight Gennady Golovkin in September, assuming Triple-G beats Danny Jacobs and the parties can come to terms. A victory for Chavez would turn his stalled career completely around.

ceiling of those who believed he had little more than a famous name, and soon afterward seemed to decline.

And, most notably, the weight between them expanded over the years. Chavez has fought as heavy as 172½ pounds, Canelo never more than 155.

Thus, the window for a once-natural matchup of two popular – and sometimes criticized – Mexican stars seemed to be all but closed. And then, seemingly out of nowhere, it happened: They agreed in January to meet on May 6 in Las Vegas.

"That was a fight we always talked about but it went away for a while," said Eric Gomez of Golden Boy Promotions, which handles Canelo. "Chavez lost to (Sergio) Martinez and moved up in weight; he fought a couple of times at light heavyweight. So we kind of forgot about it.

"It really came back to life early this year, when Chavez weighed (167.9 for his fight against Dominik Britsch in December). That's when we said, 'This is a possibility.'"

The matchup seems to be perfect for Canelo, who wanted to face a bigger man before he tangles with middleweight Gennady Golovkin in a proposed September bout. Chavez serves that purpose and also is a very strong "B" side, which turns what might've been a simple transition fight into an event.

The matchup is nothing short of a godsend for Chavez, who, at 30, had reason to believe he might never take part in a big fight again. In effect, he won the lottery when this fight was made.

The son of Hall of Famer Julio Cesar Chavez Sr. was embarrassed by Andrzej Fonfara in April 2015, getting outclassed and then knocked out in the ninth round, and has won two nondescript fights since – a decision over Marcos Reyes in July 2015 at 170¾ pounds and another over Britsch.

Now, with the Canelo fight set,

Chavez was contemplating the end of his career when opportunity knocked.

Chavez will make a career-high payday (reportedly as much $7 million) and have the opportunity to turn his career completely around with a victory.

"(Junior) told me last September that 'if (manager) Al Haymon doesn't get me good fights, maybe I'll quit boxing,'" said Salvador Rodriguez, who covers boxing in Mexico for ESPN Deportes.

"He was almost finished with boxing. And now he's in one of the biggest fights in boxing. Yes, I'm a little surprised."

Some people will be surprised if Chavez makes the agreed-upon catchweight of 164½ pounds, the least he will have weighed since he came in at 158 for the Martinez fight in September 2012. Junior has missed weight in the past, failed tests for banned substances and – fair or not – is generally seen as lazy.

The fight won't necessarily be canceled if Chavez fails to make weight but it could cost him where it hurts most: As per the contract, the price for coming in overweight is $1 million per pound.

Many observers wonder how fighting at 164.5 will impact Chavez, whose primary advantage over Canelo will be his size. Will he be too drained to cope with Canelo's speed and skills? If so, it could be an ugly fight. Or will the magnitude of the matchup motivate him to train properly?

Rodriguez believes the latter might be the case if what Chavez told him was true.

"(Chavez) told me he weighs 180 pounds right now," said Rodriguez, who spoke to the fighter about a week into February. Chavez has been working with strength and conditioning coach Memo Heredia,

who helped him make weight for the Britsch fight. “There were 80 days to go before the fight. (Chavez) was very confident. He said, ‘They are wrong if they think I have problems with my weight.’”

Said Gomez: “His dad said it himself in an interview in Mexico. His dad said, ‘Look, this is the most important fight in my son’s career. My son could lose to anybody except this guy. That’s not allowed. He’ll be in the best shape of his life.”

Rodriguez believes Canelo will win the fight but, based on Chavez’s attitude so far, he had a message for the redhead: “Be careful what you wish for.”

Indeed, the fight isn’t without risk for Canelo even though he was about a 7-1 favorite at our press time.

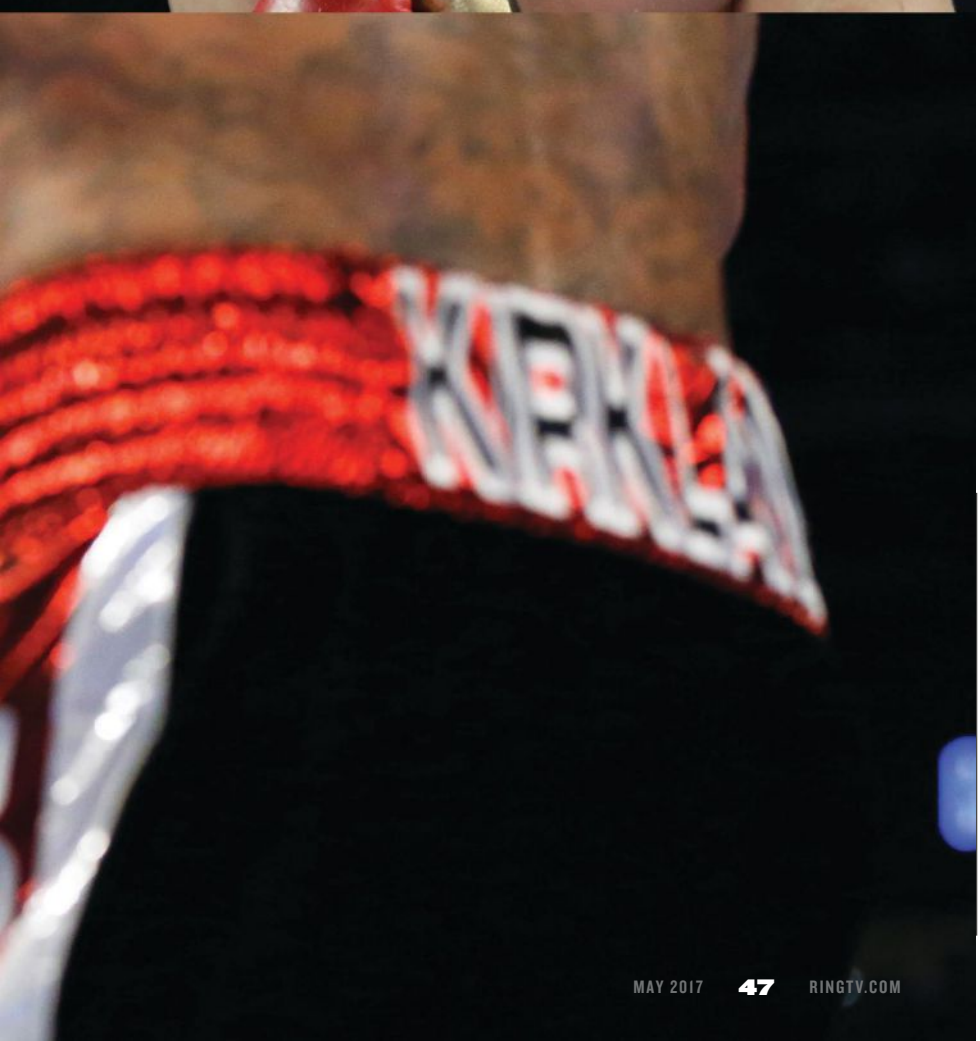
He can still make 154 pounds but it takes backbreaking work, his handlers say. He obviously is ready to make a full-fledged move to 160 pounds, at which he holds the RING championship. The catchweight is a significant leap for Canelo, though. If Chavez is focused and can make weight without depleting himself, he could be a handful for Canelo.

And, again, an even bigger fight with Golovkin awaits if both he and Canelo win their interim bouts – Triple-G was scheduled to face Danny Jacobs on March 18 – and they can come to terms on a deal.

“I’m not thinking about that, no pressure,” Alvarez said on a conference call. “I’m only thinking about Chavez Jr. I’m not thinking about down the line but, yes, it’s a big risk, moving up in weight. But that’s what makes this is a great fight. There are so many risks involved.”

He added: “I’m doing this because it’s such a significant fight, if not the biggest in Mexican history. It’s personal for me. He has talked bad about me for so many years. I want to shut him up.”

The rivals have, indeed, taken verbal jabs at one another over the years. That includes some spirited back and forth on Twitter during



Canelo is favored to beat Chavez but the latter's natural size advantage is a wild card.

negotiations, which began in November 2016.

There is no need for trash-talk to sell the fight, though, at least not in Mexico. Rodriguez, a cynical, measured journalist, agrees with Canelo: He said this fight could be the biggest all-Mexican event in the history of his country.

Canelo and Chavez undoubtedly would've filled Estadio Azteca in Mexico, which held 130,000 when Chavez Sr. pummeled Greg Haugen in 1993 but is now configured for 90,000. The fight landed at the new T-Mobile Arena because of the money Las Vegas generates, though.

And consider the fighters' drawing power on television in Mexico. Canelo reportedly attracts in excess of 20 million viewers for his fights in a country of about 123 million people. Chavez still generates about half that figure in spite of his setbacks.

Could the May 6 fight do 30 million? 40 million? Remember that boxing ranks second only to soccer in Mexico. And these two men are by far the biggest stars in Mexican boxing. On top of that, the matchup has been building for at least eight years, even if it was put on the back burner for a while; Mexicans and many others always found it intriguing.

"I can't remember the last time people were talking about a fight like they are today," Rodriguez said. "Canelo Alvarez is one of the biggest stars in boxing now. Chavez Jr. has the name of a legend, a special name in boxing in Latin America, Mexico, everywhere in the world.

"This is a big, big, big fight. ... Everybody is talking about Zamora-Zarate, Barrera-Morales III, Vazquez-Marquez III, all the big fights. This is bigger than those."

THE DEBATE RAGES ON

EXPERTS ARE STILL DIVIDED ON WHO WON THE **MARVIN HAGLER-RAY LEONARD** FIGHT 30 YEARS AFTER THE FACT

By **Tom Gray**

On a trip to New York in 2003, I stumbled across Jimmy's Corner on West 44th Street in Manhattan. A visit to the narrow boxing-themed bar would be a big thrill for any U.K.-based lover of the sweet science and I literally had to be dragged out because I had a plane to catch the next morning.

The one thing I will never forget is the heated debate I stumbled upon as I walked in. "Hagler won that fight," barked a burly, middle-aged man. "Leonard was too fast and deserved the decision," countered his equally stout associate. "If you think Leonard deserved that decision, then you don't know how to score a damn fight!" And so it went. Luckily, the two drinking buddies didn't reenact the fight and moved on to other business.

Sugar Ray Leonard dethroned long-reigning middleweight champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler on April 6, 1987, in a sold-out temporary arena at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. It was the comeback of comebacks. Leonard had fought just once in five years

Sugar Ray Leonard's victory over Marvin Hagler is a cornerstone of his legacy. A disgusted Hagler (left) never fought after the setback.

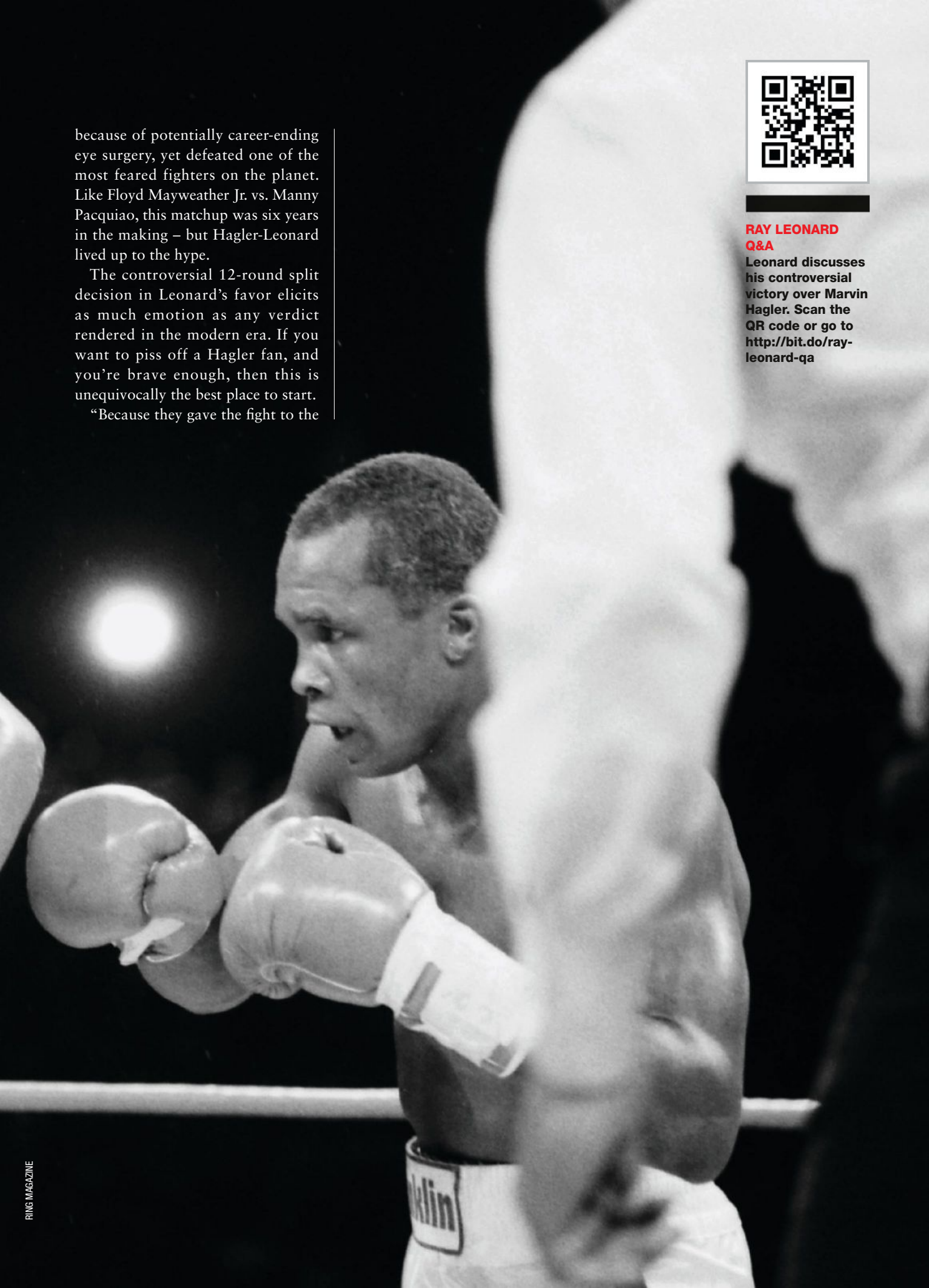
because of potentially career-ending eye surgery, yet defeated one of the most feared fighters on the planet. Like Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Manny Pacquiao, this matchup was six years in the making – but Hagler-Leonard lived up to the hype.

The controversial 12-round split decision in Leonard's favor elicits as much emotion as any verdict rendered in the modern era. If you want to piss off a Hagler fan, and you're brave enough, then this is unequivocally the best place to start.

"Because they gave the fight to the

RAY LEONARD Q&A

Leonard discusses his controversial victory over Marvin Hagler. Scan the QR code or go to http://bit.do/ray-leonard-qa

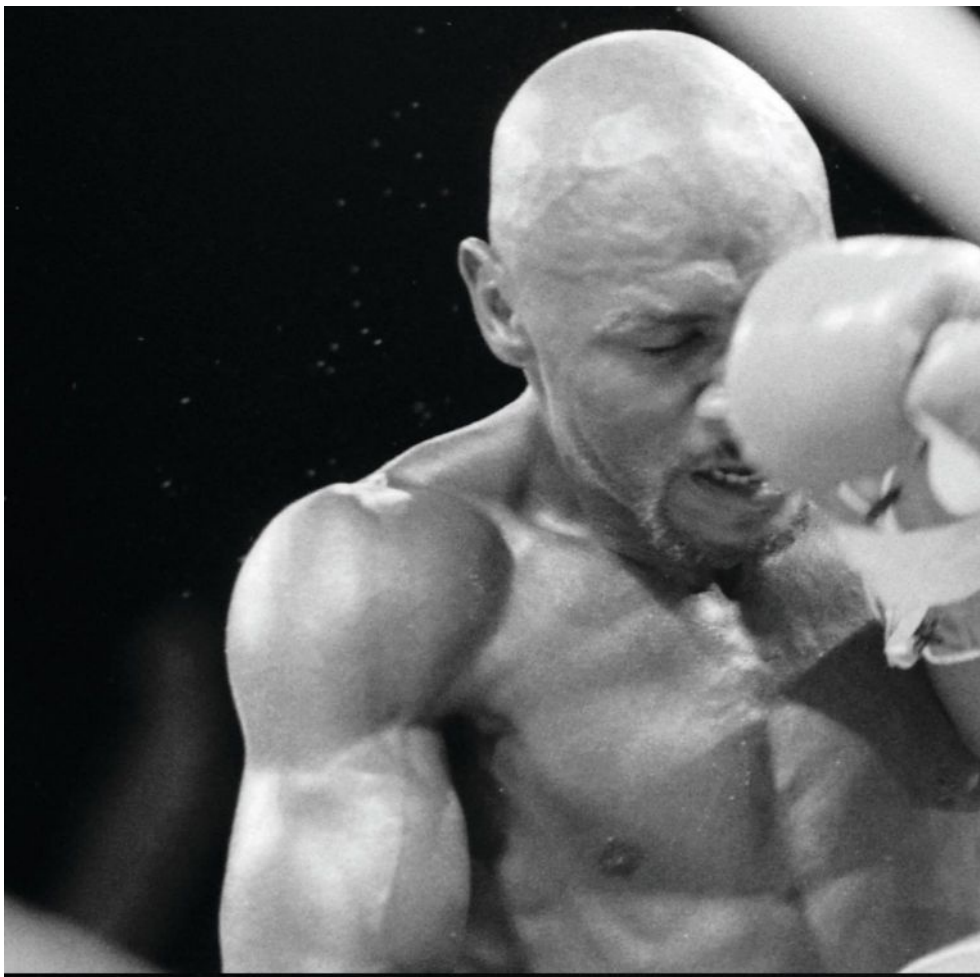


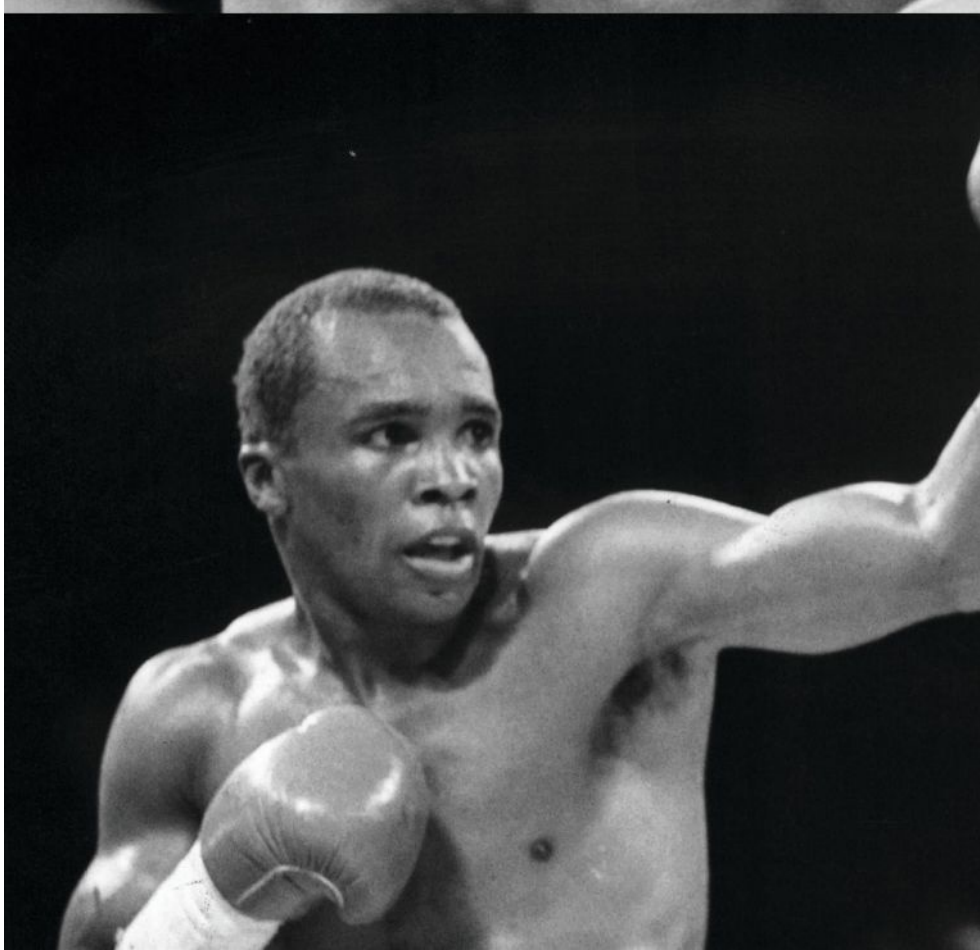
RING MAGAZINE

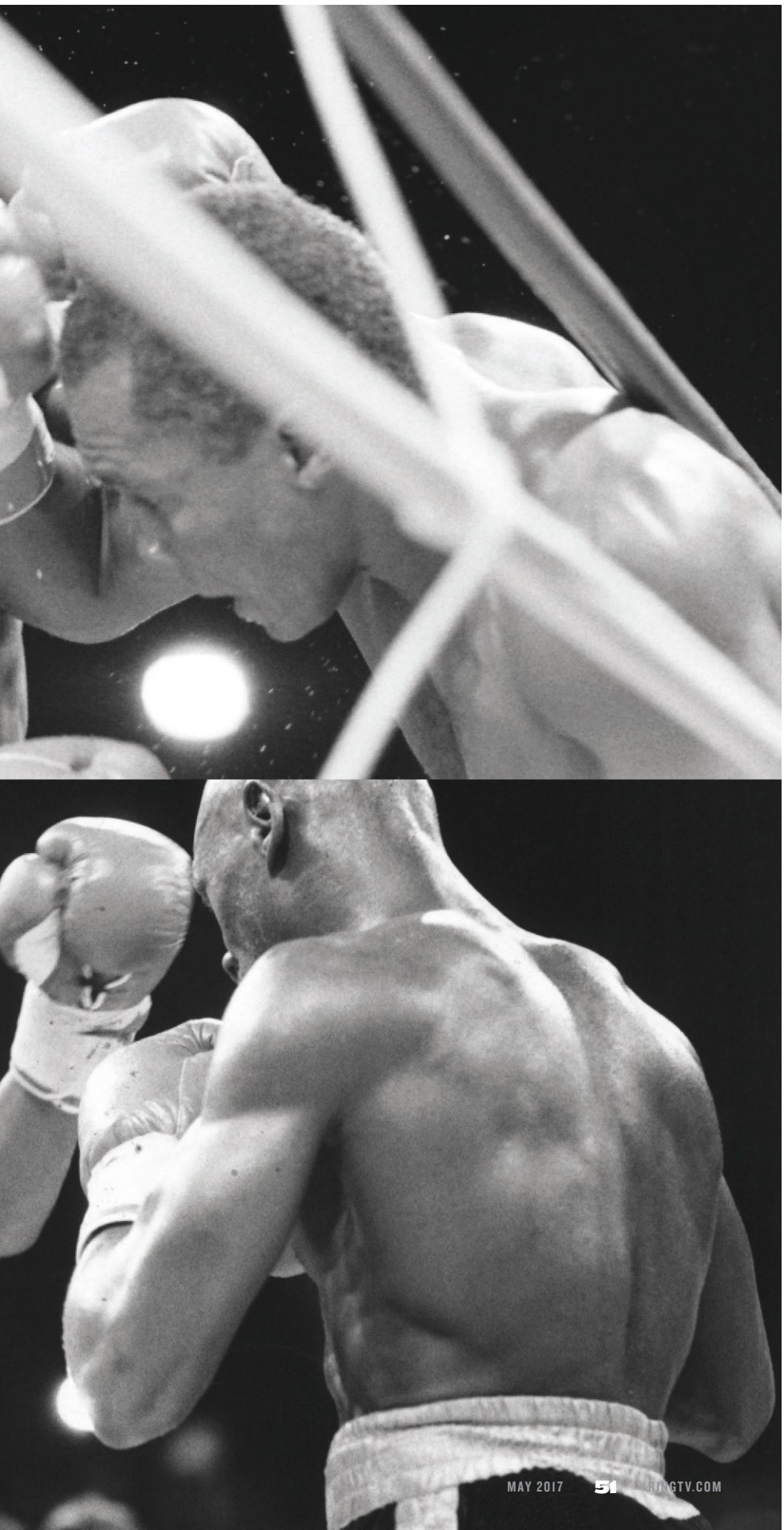
loser and not the winner," said RING contributor Ron Borges, who worked for the Boston Globe at that time and, from ringside, had Hagler winning the bout by seven rounds to five. "People will always debate it because both guys were so popular. They had loyal fans and that fight was eagerly anticipated for a very long time. Many people also felt that Ray, as he often did in his career, made a calculated decision to fight Hagler when (Hagler) was past his best and they hold that against him. The nature of the fight itself is another factor. There are those, including myself, who felt that Marvin didn't fight the smartest fight but Hagler supporters feel that Ray didn't do anything; he just stole rounds in the closing seconds."

Some feel that Leonard had a one- or two-round advantage before the opening bell for sentimental reasons; the David vs. Goliath symbolism could not possibly be lost on the judges. Former welterweight champ vs. reigning middleweight champ. Inactivity vs. dominating title reign. Fragile right eye vs. bulletproof skull. The fact that Leonard was competitive against Hagler was astonishing to most onlookers. Perhaps American broadcaster Tim Ryan said it best during the commentary: "It's going to be difficult (for the judges) to separate what they admire in this performance (by Leonard) from what is actually happening."

"That might be true, I'm not sure," said Hall of Fame boxing writer Mike Katz, who covered the bout for the New York Daily News and favored Leonard 117-112. "Ray fought so smart and would close each round with a flurry. He would do most of his best work in the last 30 seconds and steal rounds. Marvin just couldn't get going and made a mistake by starting out orthodox. He told me once that he was not only the best southpaw middleweight, he felt he was the







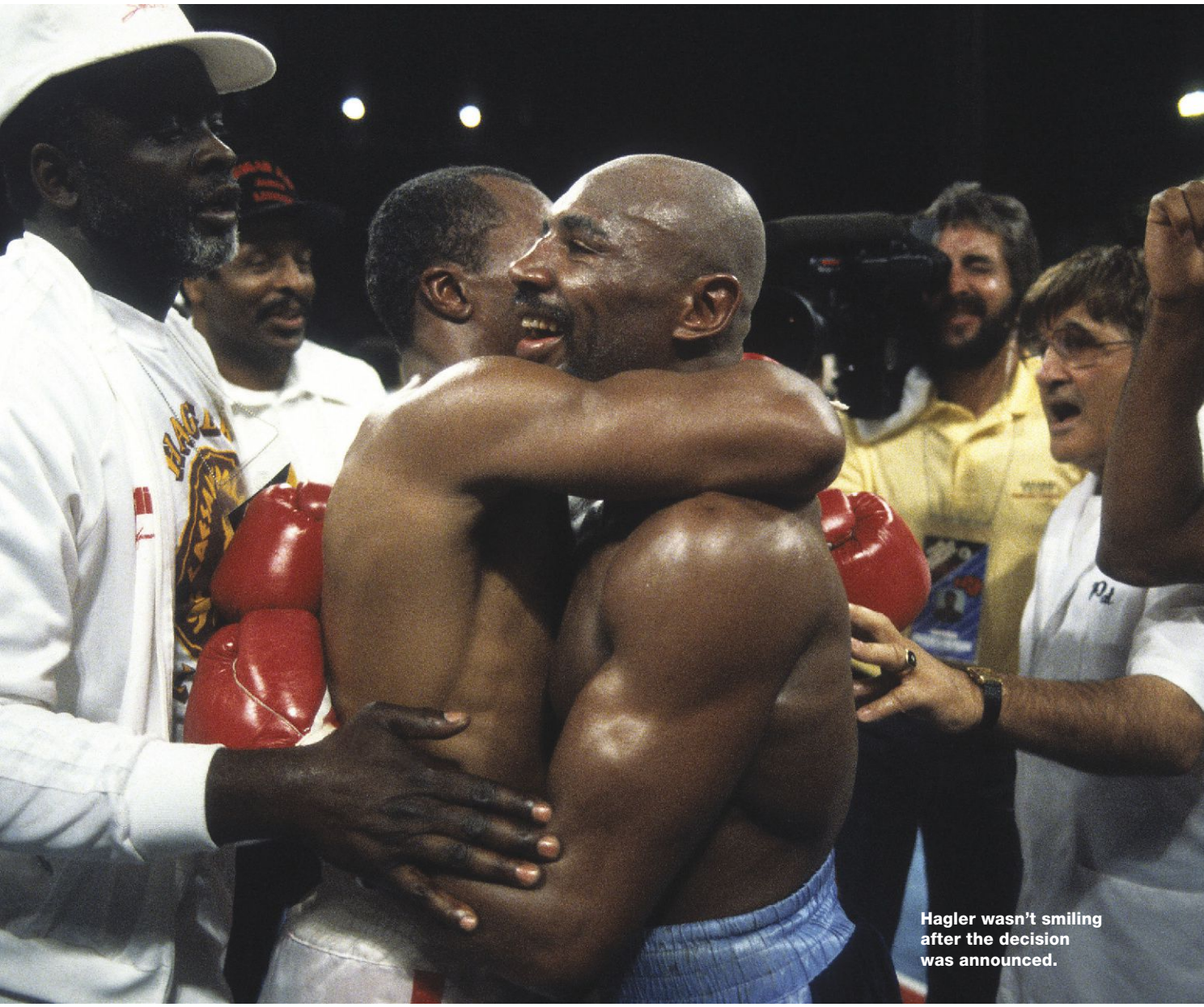
Hagler was able to pin Leonard against the ropes and pound away in the middle rounds but Leonard remained strong down the stretch.

best middleweight in the orthodox stance. I think he believed that. And while it may have been true in his prime, this was not prime Marvin Hagler. I think if they had fought when both were in their primes, Marvin would have killed him.

"I remember writing that although I was picking Leonard to win (Katz officially changed his prediction to Hagler the day before the fight) the matchup would prove nothing in terms of who was the better man. Leonard was a great fighter but he wasn't a middleweight, and Marvin, for me, was the best middleweight since (Sugar Ray) Robinson. When I was there live, I thought that Leonard was winning round after round. In hindsight, maybe I didn't give enough credit to Marvin for landing the heavier punches because every time I look at the fight, it gets closer and closer."

In capsule form, Leonard got off to a great start and then Hagler found his range. By the middle rounds, the champion frequently pinned his rival against the ropes and outworked him on the inside. Leonard was shaken momentarily in the fifth and the ninth but, amazingly, had strong, sturdy legs in the championship rounds. The challenger won two of the last three rounds on two of the judges' scorecards to secure the most important victory of his career. The 32-year-old Hagler had lost for the first time in 11 years and was absolutely crestfallen. He would never fight again.

"When the fight was over, Hagler stayed in the locker room for a long time," recalled Borges, who was very close to both the fighter and his team. "He was with (former world title challenger) Robbie Sims and the Petronelli brothers (Hagler's trainers) and they were all livid. We



Hagler wasn't smiling after the decision was announced.

finally left and walked from the back of Caesars Palace, past the pool area towards the hotel. Suddenly there's this guy loading beer into the back of a truck and Marvin asks him for a beer. The guy turned and said, 'Jesus, it's Marvin Hagler' and gave him a case. I remember Marvin turned to me and asked, 'How can you lose a fight when you don't get hit?' What he meant was, hit in a way where there's significant damage. The only damage done in that fight was done by Hagler.

"If there had been any other boxer in that ring that night other than Ray Leonard and that fight went the way it did, they would have raised Marvin Hagler's hand at the end. Do you think if that had been John Mugabi, they would have raised Mugabi's hand? Marvin felt – and I think most boxing people would agree with this – that you have to take the championship from the champion. He's defending it, the challenger has to take it."

Not every boxing person agrees with that philosophy. Jose Juan Guerra was one of the official judges. He turned in an astonishingly wide 118-110 card for Leonard. The other two judges, Dave Moretti and the late Lou Filippo, had it closer: Moretti favored Leonard 115-113 while Filippo scored it for Hagler by the same score.

"You should pretend like the fighters are your brothers," said Moretti, an official in Nevada for 40 years. "I don't care who the champion is. I don't care what their last name is. I don't care about none of that. All I care about is that there are two people doing their best in the ring and I need to do my best on the outside.

"I can't speak for the other officials but I don't care who (the fighters) are. I don't care about religion, color – nothing – I show no

THE NUMBERS

A look at the CompuBox statistics for the Sugar Ray Leonard-Marvin Hagler fight – overall punches only – and the official scoring, plus the card of THE RING contributor Tom Gray, who scored the fight from video.

	Thrown	Landed	Percentage
Hagler	792	291	37
Leonard	629	306	49

JUDGES	LEONARD	HAGLER
Lou Filippo	113	115
Jose Juan Guerra	118	110
Dave Moretti	115	113
Tom Gray (THE RING Magazine)	115	114

bias towards anybody. You have to score the round exactly as you see it. Forget who's attached to the gloves, just score the round. Be honest, be dedicated and always remember: These fighters went through hell to get to this point. They don't just climb in the ring and fight, it's a very tough life being a boxer."

The third man in the ring that night was Richard Steele who, by 1987, had established himself as a respected referee. Steele worked Hagler's three-round demolition of Thomas Hearns two years earlier and would officiate a plethora of superfights during a classic era. In the Hagler-Leonard fight, Steele warned the challenger on several occasions for hitting after the bell and holding, but no points were deducted.

"I followed the rules and regulations," Steele said. "I was conscious of enforcing those rules in that fight the same way I was in every other fight. I was never close to deducting points. I issued strong warnings but there was no need to take any points off because Leonard followed my instructions after I warned him. There was no advantage (gained).

"When it was over, I really didn't know who had won. I felt it was a very close fight and either one of them could have pulled it out. The more I watch it the closer it gets but I still think that Leonard deserved it by a very close margin. It was one of the best fights I was ever involved with."

In a poll conducted via THE RING's official Twitter account (see chart), 1,749 people voted on who they felt won the fight. The results favored Hagler but it was far from one-sided. I also contacted several former and reigning world champions for their views but abandoned that idea because so many of them were noncommittal about the outcome. I've watched the fight dozens of times and the final round is actually one of my earliest boxing memories. I've always scored in favor of Leonard, although my most recent card is the closest I've ever had it (115-114 Leonard).

The most ardent Hagler fans will forever consider the decision highway robbery but the most objective among us wonder whether that is the result of admiration for their great champion and contempt for Leonard. For the most part, all avenues point to this being an extremely close fight. Leonard himself acknowledged that fact.

"If anything – even if the decision had gone Hagler's way – it would have been by a one- or two-point deficit," the former five-weight titleholder told me on the 25th anniversary of the fight. "Did I want to win? Yes, I wanted to win. Did I want the decision? Yes, I wanted the decision. I won that fight, no matter what – forget the decision!"

Of course, fans will never forget one of the most disputed decisions in history. Ultimately, though, it didn't make or break either of the great participants.

"Leonard's legacy was secure following his wins over Hearns, (Roberto) Duran and (Wilfred) Benitez," said Katz when asked whether Leonard truly needed Hagler as a signature victory. "He was going down in history as one of the all-time greats and, pound-for-pound, I still think he was better than Hagler. Hagler was just bigger, and in their primes I believe Hagler would have won because of his size. You couldn't hurt Marvin; he had one of the greatest chins ever."

Borges believes that Hagler is the best middleweight of all time. And although he also regards Leonard as "one of the greatest fighters ever," he couldn't resist teasing him about the Hagler fight several years later.

"I once provided commentary on a fight card with Ray and Barry Tompkins," he said. "I can't remember what the main event was but there was a preliminary bout on and we were struggling for things to say. Finally, I said, 'Hey Ray, there's a question I've been meaning to ask you for a few years.' He asked me what it was and I said, 'If you had ever fought Marvin Hagler, do you think you would have won?' Barry Tompkins starts laughing and Ray's eyes were bulging out of his head. When the broadcast was over Ray was still pissed at me. He said, 'I can't believe you f---ing did that!"

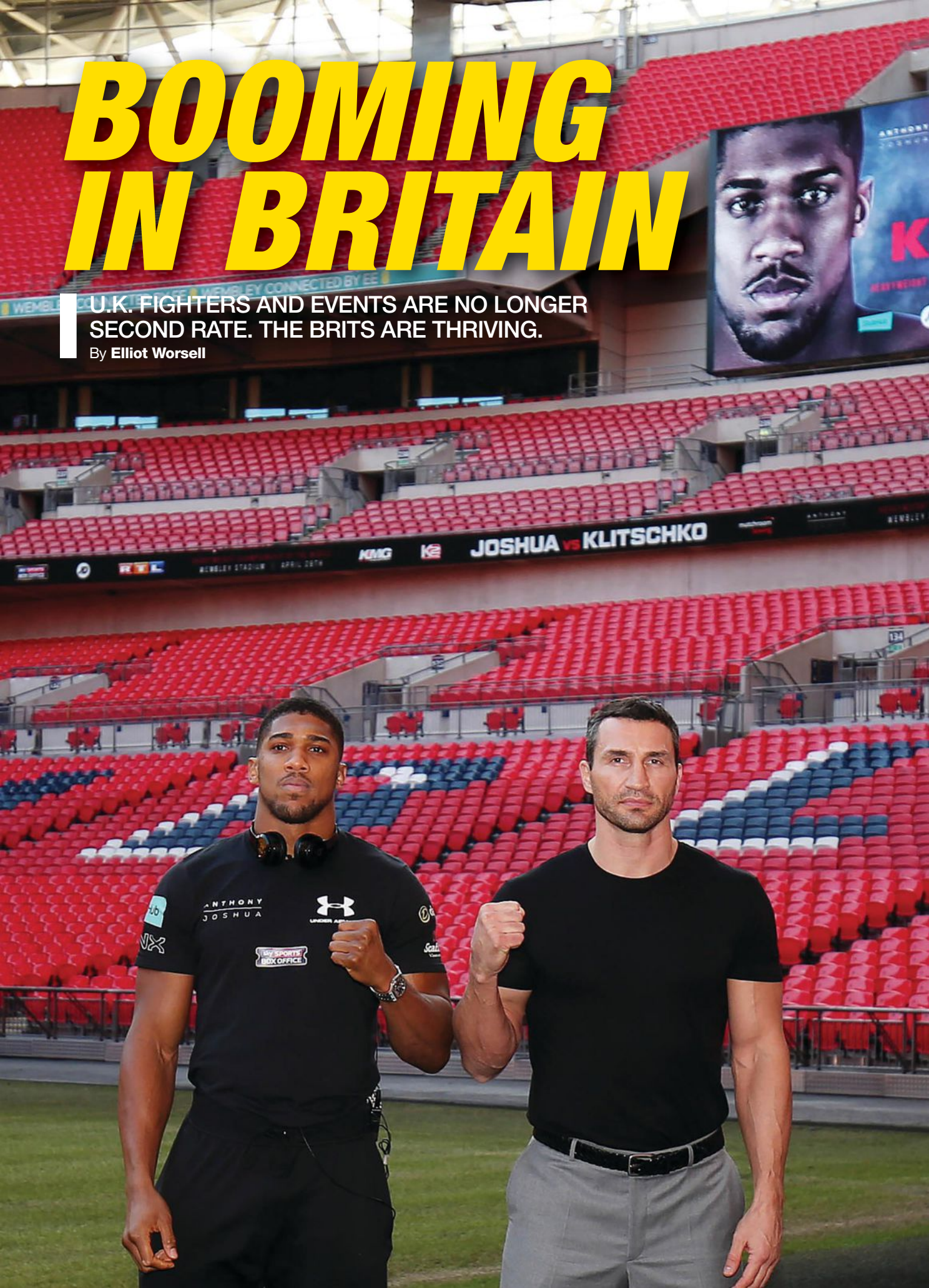
Feelings will always run high when it comes to "The Superfight." Hagler was unavailalble for comment before our deadline but it's common knowledge that the Leonard fight isn't his favorite topic of conversation. He feels he was screwed. Many agree with him, many don't. That's not up for debate.

Tom Gray is a U.K. correspondent, editor for RingTV.com and a member of THE RING Ratings Panel. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing

BOOMING IN BRITAIN

U.K. FIGHTERS AND EVENTS ARE NO LONGER SECOND RATE. THE BRITS ARE THRIVING.

By **Elliot Worsell**



AP

Imagine the United Kingdom as a prizefighter with a career trajectory that historically goes something like this: Protected at first, and keen to manufacture a record of easy wins, he will at some point bravely set sail overseas, challenge a titleholder from one of the genuine boxing superpowers – think America, Mexico or Puerto Rico – and, more likely than not, come up short. It's then that his limitations are exposed, his reputation sullied, and all that's left is for him to return to his comfort zone and start again. Nice try. Good effort.

The Anthony Joshua-Wladimir Klitschko fight on April 29 at Wembley Stadium is only the latest major boxing event in the U.K.

But that was then. That was the *old* United Kingdom. Nowadays it's different. Now the boxing world has grown accustomed to seeing U.K. fighters not only hold titles and travel with success but also do some record-breaking and trailblazing on their own patch. In short, boxing in the U.K., once home of the horizontal heavyweight, is currently booming. It's back, better than ever. Its events are big and sold-out. Its fighters are talented and go-getting. Its reputation is enhanced and well-deserved.

Lovable losers no more, a new breed of boxers has been embraced by U.K. fans in the last few years: winners. A strange concept, I know, especially for an island that has long had an affinity with and an admiration for those who find comfort in second place. But it has been one forced upon us by countless hungry and determined fighters successfully flying the flag at home and abroad. Indeed, at the time of writing, there were 23 U.K. boxers (and one from the Republic of Ireland) rated by THE RING, many of them with a belt of some description to their name and four residing in the marquee heavyweight division. Broken down further, in divisions above flyweight, only junior featherweight and junior lightweight lack a fighter from the U.K. or the Republic of Ireland in their Top 10.

Oh, and how about Tyson Fury of England being crowned RING Fighter of the Year for 2015 and Carl Frampton of Northern Ireland repeating the trick in 2016? That's what winning looks like.

"I think the U.K. and Ireland are proper fighting nations," Frampton said. "We're flying at the minute and I hope it can continue for a long time. I hope the champions who are around can help breed more success and the younger guys coming through can fill our boots and continue what we're doing."

Not long ago boxing fans in the United Kingdom had a choice of two platforms on which to regularly

THE TITLEHOLDERS

The U.K. currently has 11 major titleholders of a potential 85, including those of THE RING and the four recognized sanctioning bodies. The titleholders and five more top contenders are listed here. Included are the man each beat to win his belt and their promoters.

ANTHONY JOSHUA
IBF heavyweight
Defeated: Charles Martin (2016)
Promoter: Eddie Hearn

TYSON FURY
RING heavyweight
Defeated: Wladimir Klitschko (2015)
Promoter: Mick Hennessy

TONY BELLEW
WBC cruiserweight
Defeated: Ilunga Makabu (2016)
Promoter: Eddie Hearn

JAMES DEGALE
IBF super middleweight
Defeated: Andre Dirrell (2015)
Promoter: Eddie Hearn

BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
WBO middleweight
Defeated: Andy Lee (2015)
Promoter: Frank Warren

KELL BROOK
IBF welterweight
Defeated: Shawn Porter (2014)
Promoter: Eddie Hearn

RICKY BURNS
WBA junior welterweight
Defeated: Michele Di Rocco (2016)
Promoter: Eddie Hearn

TERRY FLANAGAN
WBO lightweight
Defeated: Jose Zepeda (2015)
Promoter: Frank Warren

LEE SELBY
IBF featherweight
Defeated: Evgeny Gradovich (2015)
Promoter: Eddie Hearn

LEE HASKINS
IBF bantamweight
Defeated: *Upgraded when Randy Cabellero failed to make weight (2015)
Promoter: Cyclone Promotions

KHALID YAFAI
WBA junior bantamweight
Defeated: Luis Concepcion (2016)
Promoter: Eddie Hearn

HONORABLE MENTIONS: JAMIE MCDONNELL (HEARN), AMIR KHAN (FREE AGENT), CARL FRAMPTON (CYCLONE PROMOTIONS), NATHAN CLEVERLY (HEARN), ANTHONY CROLLA (HEARN)

TITLES BY COUNTRY

There are a potential 85 world titleholders in 17 weight classes if you include THE RING and the four major sanctioning bodies (IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO). Sixty-nine of those titles were filled at our deadline, meaning there were 16 vacancies (including THE RING's 12). The number of titles by country are listed below.

Note: Fighters who hold multiple titles are included more than once here. For example, Kazakhstan has four titles but only two titleholders (Gennady Golovkin, with three belts, and Zhanat Zhakiyanov). The number of individual titleholders from each country are in parentheses where multiple titleholders are involved.

U.S. 16 (12)
UNITED KINGDOM 11
JAPAN 9 (8)
MEXICO 7 (6)
PHILIPPINES 4
KAZAKHSTAN 4 (2)
CUBA 2
RUSSIA 2
UKRAINE 2
VENEZUELA 2 (1)
THAILAND 2
NICARAGUA 1
CHINA 1
CANADA 1
GERMANY 1
PANAMA 1
NEW ZEALAND 1
SWEDEN 1
NAMIBIA 1

Multiple titleholders (in order of weight): Andre Ward (three), Gennady Golovkin (three), Canelo Alvarez (two), Terence Crawford (three), Jorge Linares (two) and Shinsuke Yamanaka (two).

Promoter Eddie Hearn has played a major role in the resurgence of boxing in the U.K.

watch the sport they love. There was Sky Sports, essentially the mainstay of the sport in the satellite era, and BoxNation, a subscription channel kickstarted by promoter Frank Warren. Eddie Hearn, the promoter aligned with Sky Sports, signed much of the available talent and fans were left unsure whether to proclaim him the messiah or instead worry about the future of a sport possibly governed by a single promoter and broadcaster. Yet Warren, in typically bullish fashion, fought back. He stayed true to his belief that the BoxNation format would work. He invested in the rights to international fights, the kind which secure the loyalty of the hardcore fan base, and last year announced a link-up with BT Sport, the multimedia and telecommunications giant. Throw into the mix Channel 5 and ITV, terrestrial stations showcasing the sport on a semi-regular basis, and it's tough to remember a time when U.K. boxing fans or boxers have had so many options.

"The market is incredible at the minute and I think you have to give a lot of credit to the promoters," Frampton said. "Although we're a rival promotional company, you have to look at what Eddie Hearn has done and give him kudos. It has been incredible. Frank Warren is still doing it and you've also got Cyclone Promotions (Frampton's team) who now have terrestrial television exposure with five dates on Channel 5. It's all about the TV companies getting behind it. That's what we need.

"The atmospheres created back home are also incredible. There's going to be 90,000 people watching Anthony Joshua versus Wladimir Klitschko at Wembley Stadium and it will be amazing. But if you go to any small hall show featuring guys you've never heard of, the atmosphere will be

just as incredible. I don't know how they do it."

Warren, a fixture in U.K. boxing since the 1980s, is perhaps best placed to comment on its progress. For when Warren says the going's good, and when he seems rejuvenated by a new television deal, you take it as a sign the dark days are behind us.

"I'm now working with some of the best talent the U.K. has seen in recent years," he said. "Boxing's really hot. There are some brilliant fighters out there. Some (promoters) focus on the main event, but we're bringing through a lot of great young talents. We do it from day one. It's important the fans recognize them from day one and that the boxers get seen."

Amid the scramble for fighters, titles and television dates, there remains a loose sense of order. Warren alludes to it, in fact, when he says he starts them off on their journey and then guides them along the way. That's his niche, his latest role. Meanwhile, Hearn, Warren's main rival in the promotional stakes, will tell you Warren's emphasis on building prospects is a move only made because it is he, Eddie Hearn, who holds the keys to the major stars and blockbuster main events in U.K. boxing today. "It's all because of what we and Sky have done," said Hearn when asked to explain his run of success. "I don't know what else to tell you. All I can be is egotistically honest. I'd love to say it was all me, but Sky are able to change the growth of a sport very quickly if it's promoted properly and if the talent is there."

On the day I visit Hearn at his father's Brentwood mansion and office, otherwise known as the house in which he was raised, the 37-year-old promoter was about to announce, via press release, that the ticket allocation for his April 29 world heavyweight title fight between Joshua and Klitschko at Wembley Stadium has been lifted from 80,000 to 90,000 (after a safety clearance from London Mayor Sadiq Khan). That's the reason his smile is even wider than normal. It's why he wants to talk, shout it from the rooftops, be the promoter. It might also mean the large canvas print of a sold-out Wembley Stadium on his office wall soon gets replaced by a fresher one. In the current picture, taken the night Wembley Stadium hosted the 2014 grudge rematch between Carl Froch and George Groves, some 80,000 people are present. But Hearn, ever the competitor, wants to squeeze 10,000 more into the venue come April.

"When we sold the final ticket for Joshua-Klitschko there were 34,000 people in the online queue who weren't able to get tickets," he said, shaking his head in disbelief. "Which tells you we probably could have sold it out again immediately."

I gaze at the image of Wembley Stadium and recall what boxing used to mean in the United Kingdom. The stench of chlorine. The empty plastic seats. The dead atmosphere. The journeymen who didn't really want to be there. The ring-card girls who didn't really want to be there. The gamblers who didn't really want to be there. The tacky belts. The dry ice and lasers. The generic entrance music that always started too late. The main event that meant nothing beyond the four walls of the leisure center in which it took place. The crushing sadness of it all.

Yet Wembley Stadium, on that aforementioned night in May 2014, couldn't have been further from all that, and the same can be said of any number of events which take place in the United Kingdom today. They're different. They smell different, taste different, look different. The crowd consists of an altogether different demographic: younger, hipper, more sure of themselves, if less sure about boxing. Old-timers and purists recoil in disgust, of course, for this crowd ostensibly represents the youth of today. But Hearn and Sky Sports have cultivated an environment which screams forward-thinking and long-termism, two concepts which have forever been foreign words in U.K. boxing.

"The success has come from taking the chances to do bigger shows," Hearn said. "We've increased the hype and the perception of The Big Event. That's the art of promoting. You have to make people feel like they have to be at an event and can't miss it for anything. Once you've got that, you've mastered it. You can't do that for every event, mind you. Sometimes you get it half-right and you get a half-full arena. But the difference is the television product.

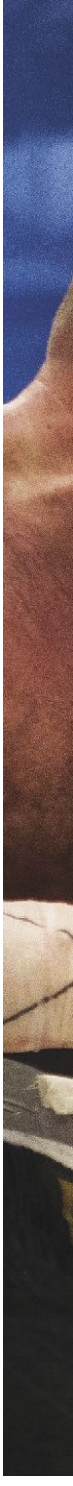
OLYMPIC KICK-START

Success, they say, breeds success. And while the disparity between the professional and amateur games remains large, there can be little doubt that Team GB's success at the 2012 London Olympics went some way toward kick-starting this renaissance period for a nation steeped in fighting history.

Anthony Joshua, Luke Campbell and Nicola Adams each won gold medals at those Games, Fred Evans of Wales bagged silver, there was a bronze for Anthony Ogogo and four other British boxers reached the quarterfinal stage. It was, all in all, a rousing success for the host nation. Event days were sold-out, fights were televised by the BBC – a channel which has ignored professional boxing in recent times – and the nation truly got behind its competitors and for a short time found itself immersed in the sweet science.

Better yet, the 2012 Games heralded the arrival of Joshua as a genuine star of British sport. Even then it was clear he possessed the ingredients; the only thing bigger than his biceps was his smile. One part Frank Bruno, one part Lennox Lewis, little did we know Joshua, the man known as AJ, would four years later become not only a heavyweight titleholder but arguably one of the most marketable boxers on the planet.

– Elliot Worsell



Tyson Fury (left) opened up the heavyweight division with his victory over Klitschko.

When you used to tune into 'Friday Fight Night' on Sky Sports the event would take place at somewhere like Huddersfield Leisure Centre and there would be 700 people sparsely spread around to watch a Commonwealth title fight between a Ghanaian and a Brit and an eight-rounder as chief support. How do you expect to grow the sport based on *that* product?

"Now when you tune in you're seeing packed arenas, people dressed up and people dancing to music and having a great time, as well as boxers who are familiar to you because they have been built. Good fights, longer shows and bigger cards. It's just a progression. It's a much better product now and that's why you are seeing more interest in the sport. It's sexy right now."

Sexy or not, so strong is the Hearn movement, some call it a cult. More appropriate, though, is culture – primarily an online culture boosted by the promoter's social media presence and his propensity to talk whenever and wherever an opportunity presents itself. He's a thoroughly modern promoter, unashamedly so, and has used this knowledge of the now to excel in areas approached with caution by those from a bygone era.

"So many people look at the success of our shows and the success of our pay-per-views and now see that as a market to exploit," Hearn said. "They couldn't be more wrong. You can't just walk in and get it right. I couldn't go to America and smash the shows and fill arenas like we do over here. It doesn't work like that. There are politics and you have to have an understanding of the landscape and the society. We do that very well here. But America is a totally different market. If I was a promoter in America, I'd be looking at Britain and going, 'Wow, that's unbelievable. Look at *that*.' But you can't just pitch up and get it rolling."

Despite the U.K.'s rip-roaring success, there remains a romanticized view of boxing in America. Hearn, for instance, admits he'd one day like to promote some events over there, maybe even sign some American talent, while Frampton, a man who can't walk the streets of Belfast without being accosted, remains of the belief that only once you have cracked America have you truly made it.

"The U.K. is flying at the minute," he reiterated, "but for me, and I'm sure it's the same for a lot of boys back home, you want to be appreciated by the American fight fans and American media first and foremost. By taking on guys like Leo Santa Cruz, that's what I'm trying to do. I just won THE RING's Fighter of the Year and Tyson Fury won it (in 2015). That's great. It shows Britain is where boxing is at right now. But we still need to keep proving ourselves overseas."

The United Kingdom: Land of Hype *and* Glory. Long may it continue.

THE BUILDING OF

THE LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT'S SECRET TO SUCCESS IS BALANCE BETWEEN BOXING AND HIS DAY JOB

By **Joseph Santoliquito**

JOE SMITH JR.

The eyes are at half-mast. They usually are in the morning gloom as Joe Smith Jr., hard hat tucked under his arm, muddy work boots scraping against the cement walkway, trudges toward his Jeep.

Most days on Long Island, New York, begin like this for one of today's best known light heavyweights. He's either heading to powerwash a septic

Joe Smith Jr. said of his two jobs, union laborer and boxer: "I don't really think I would be able to do one without the other."

tank with fumes so nauseating he can hardly breathe, pour concrete, lay cement blocks, dig trenches in freezing temperatures, lug sheetrock or do a demolition job that entails ripping up floors and tearing down walls nonstop for eight or 10 hours.

It's draining. It taxes not just the body but the mind. It's true hands-in-the-dirt grunt labor. It's who Smith is, and it's something that makes him unusual among elite boxers.

Whereas other pro fighters of Smith's caliber view themselves as "full-time" boxers, Smith tells himself most days to "keep it moving" as a full-time construction worker before he heads home and transforms into a fighter.

"There isn't a day that goes by when I'm not asking myself, 'What the hell am I doing here?' since I have boxing," Smith said. "But I do see how my day job, so to speak, works well with my night job as a fighter. I don't really think I would be able to do one without the other. You have to be mentally strong to do both. My days will begin around 5:30, 6 in the morning and I'm dog-tired. But if I don't work hard now, in and out of the ring, I won't get the good things in life that I want.

"It's why I get right to the gym around 5 every afternoon after working eight hours of construction. Tell me another fighter in the world that does that. I've gotten used to it all through the years. Hell, I'm human. Every day I go to work I want to leave. I just push myself to stay as long as I can. I keep myself motivated to go past that pain. It's where that mental attitude carries on into the ring. No one can beat down a hard-hat guy who can take anything. I think I'm in that category. All I needed was an opportunity. It's all I was looking for. And look what happened when I got it."

Yes, look what happened.

The boxing world received a face-first introduction to the pride of New York Laborers Local 66 union last June, when the 27-year-old Smith, a 25-to-1 underdog, shocked everyone by stopping heralded light heavyweight contender Andrzej Fonfara on national TV from Chicago's UIC Pavilion. It was considered a tune-up fight for Fonfara. For Smith (23-1, 19 knockouts), it was a life-changing opportunity.

Smith was back on the job with his co-workers two weeks after knocking out Bernard Hopkins.

A looping counter right that Fonfara didn't see dropped him. A pulverizing left hook finished him at 2:32 of the first round. Suddenly, the hard-nosed construction worker was trending.

"Yep, everyone found out about me then," Smith said with a laugh, "and no one outside of my corner and probably the guys I work with thought I could win. That to me changed everything. For a second, I thought about leaving construction, but that's not me and who I am. Boxing is such a crazy game that you could go months and months without

a fight. How will I pay my bills? How will I get the things that I want and do things for my family? I wasn't about to change everything, because working construction and doing all of the things I did got me here. Why change something that isn't broken?"

Actually, hardly any of this crazy tale would be possible without the Capobianco brothers, Jerry and Phil. To understand Joe, you have to first understand them. Jerry, Joe's trainer, and Phil, his manager, grew up in what can be called a "boxing family." They're the two youngest of four boys, Johnny and Kevin being their older siblings, and all of them were fighters. They would rattle the house pounding away on an old heavy bag that used to hang from a wooden beam in their basement and even got other neighborhood kids involved. Boxing is part of their DNA.

The love of the sport came from their father, John Sr. He ran the Huntington Athletic Club on Long Island, where he came across a young Gerry Cooney and got the future heavyweight title challenger started. Cooney and the Capobianco boys all went to Walt Whitman High School.

"My brother Jerry is the one who really found Joe," Phil said. "Joe is a story and a half. He was always a good kid, but Jerry made a difference in Joe, and I know my father would be very proud of the work Jerry has done with him. My father, unfortunately, passed away in 2011.

"I'll be honest, I wasn't a believer at first. Jerry stuck with Joe and saw things that Joe didn't see in himself. Before the Fonfara fight, I told Joe, 'You're going to find yourself one of the hardest-hitting light heavies in the world, or you're going to kick yourself for blowing the chance of a lifetime.' The world found out about Joe Smith that night."

It's the same work ethic John Sr. instilled in his boys. "Joe is definitely a product of my father," said Phil. "My father was everybody's father. And Joe did train hard for that Fonfara fight, but he trained hard because Jerry was constantly on him."

It wasn't easy. At first, there was a lot of prying. Jerry came across Smith at Heavy Hitters Gym on Long Island, when Smith was around 18. To define Smith as an undisciplined ruffian would be pretty accurate. He came and went as he pleased. He'd bang the heavy bag with a seeming nonchalance toward getting better.

'NO ONE CAN BEAT DOWN A HARD-HAT GUY WHO CAN TAKE ANYTHING. I THINK I'M IN THAT CATEGORY. ALL I NEEDED WAS AN OPPORTUNITY. … AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I GOT IT.' – JOE SMITH JR.

It twisted Jerry up. He saw Smith fight in the New York City Golden Gloves and watched him lose, thinking to himself, "If someone taught this kid a little something, he could be special."

Smith actually reminded Jerry a lot of himself and his brothers.

"Joe had a toughness that was sort of rare, but it was hard to control, because Joe was a pain in the ass in the beginning," Jerry said. "It started slowly. I went over to him and taught him how to throw his right hand better. Little things like that."

Jerry told Joe to be at the gym the next day at 6 in the evening. Smith didn't show up until 7:15. Smith asked Jerry if he was ready to train. Jerry told him, "No, I'm going home. I said 6 o'clock." The next day, Smith was slightly better. He showed up at 6:15. Jerry walked out again. "I said 6 o'clock."

The day after, Smith was at the gym at 6.

"Joe lacked discipline, and that changed over time," Jerry said. "Once Joe began growing up a little, my brother and I got him a job. We didn't even know if Joe would show up or not. That's where I think the construction job began kicking in. He has discipline today. That wasn't just the boxing that did it. Joe knew he had a job to go to every morning – and he knew he had to be there on time."

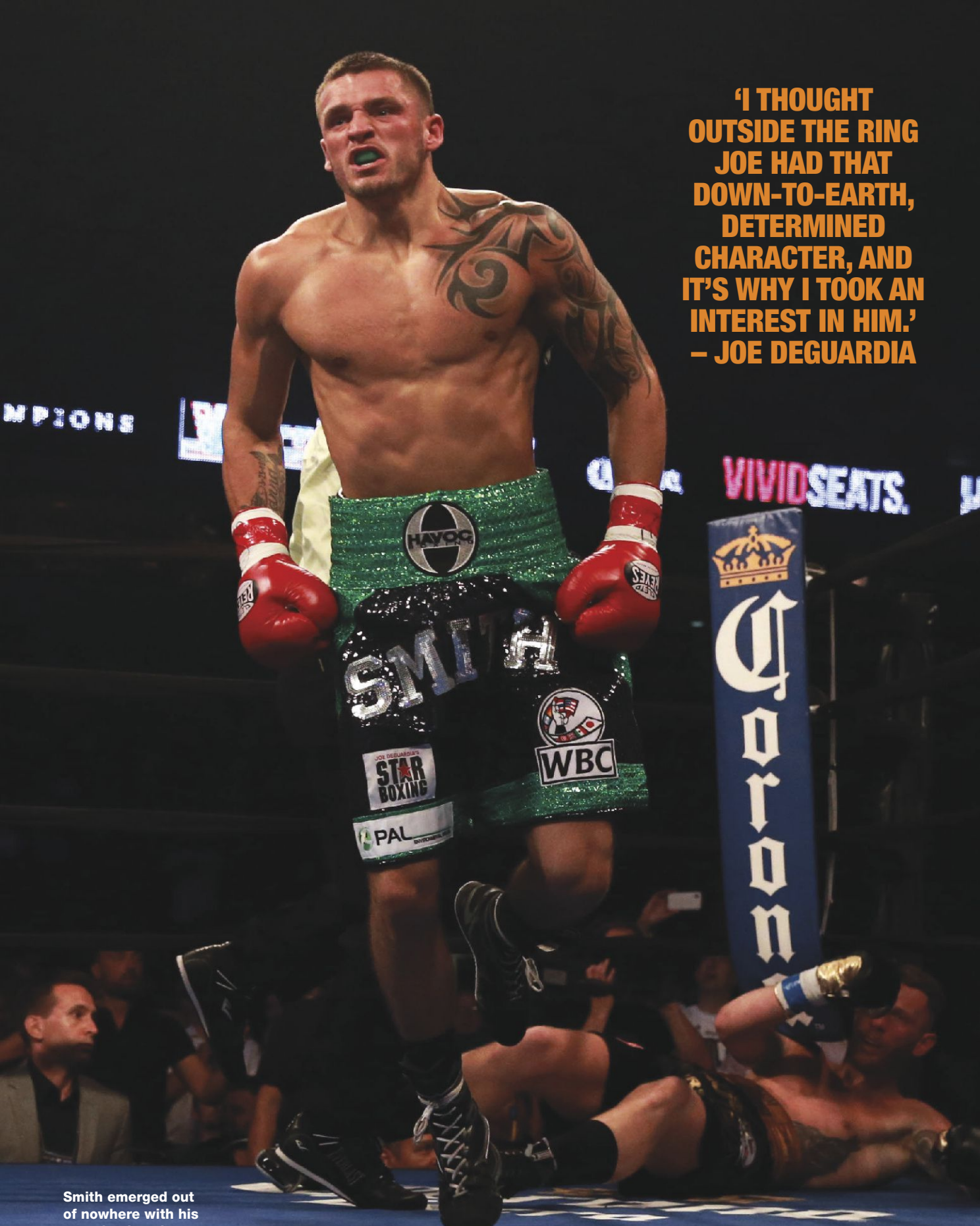
Gradually, as Smith rose through the club circuit, he made converts. First was Phil, after Smith went more than six rounds for the first time and stopped Dion Savage in the ninth, in September 2015. Later that year it was Smith himself, when he went 10 in a unanimous decision over local pro Will Rosinsky on the Danny Jacobs-Peter Quillin undercard at Brooklyn's Barclays Center.

Smith idolized Rosinsky for his distinguished amateur achievements. That was Smith's first standard. Once he topped that, his confidence soared.

"In Joe's mind, Will was something special," Jerry said. "That was the fight that I think told our team, when Joe is right and trains hard, he could beat anyone at 175 pounds. It was a big stage. I always thought Joe would be great, but we saw then against Rosinsky what Joe could really do. There's an inner strength about Joe that's special and rare. I've been around the fight game my whole life and Joe has a toughness you can't teach. It's something that you have or don't have – and Joe has it."

His 2016 started with the Fonfara victory, and it was topped off by being handpicked for the career finale of future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins. It would take place in mid-December at the Forum in Inglewood, California. Again, not many gave Smith much of a chance. Hopkins went back to his "Executioner" motif and Smith became an afterthought, presumably just another notch and a trivia answer to "B-Hop's" last fight.

No one figured the "hard-hat guy" would surface. Hopkins won



‘I THOUGHT OUTSIDE THE RING JOE HAD THAT DOWN-TO-EARTH, DETERMINED CHARACTER, AND IT’S WHY I TOOK AN INTEREST IN HIM.’ – JOE DEGUARDIA

Smith emerged out of nowhere with his stunning knockout of title challenger Andrzej Fonfara in June 2016.

one round on most scorecards – the fourth. Otherwise, the HBO-televised fight served as a great showcase for Smith, who trended once again after sending the still-formidable Hopkins through the ropes 53 seconds into the ninth round. B-Hop tried to convince those at ringside and fans watching at home that Smith pushed him. The fight tape proved Hopkins' assertions to be incorrect.

Two weeks later, Smith was back on a construction site absorbing the accolades of his coworkers.

"Aside from Joe's boxing ability and his punch, I thought outside the ring Joe had that down-to-earth, determined character, and it's why I took an interest in him," said Joe DeGuardia, president and CEO of Star Boxing, which promotes Smith. "With Joe, you have to do a lot of dusting and polishing to find the final product, and Joe's still not there. I believe Joe can be even better.

"When you build a house, before you build it, there's a lot of dirt at the base. Building Joe has been a process, but the Capobiancos have put a lot of work into him. I think it's important that Joe is still working his regular job. I think back when I was boxing and I was in law school, and people would ask how I could do both. Well, they complemented each other. Boxing and law school forced me to be focused at a young age. I think the same thing applies here with Joe. He has the personality that needs that kind of regimen."

The goal in 2017 is to get WBC titleholder and former RING champion Adonis Stevenson in the ring before the year is up. Team Smith feels they have a compelling argument: What Smith did to Fonfara was something Stevenson couldn't do, which was to stop him.

"Joe doesn't have it easy, but Joe doesn't really have it that hard, either," Jerry said. "The first time I went to Phil, I told him that I think Joe can really be something. We made a promise to Joe and his father that he's going to be better off after his boxing career is over than when he's fighting … and with boxing, you never know.

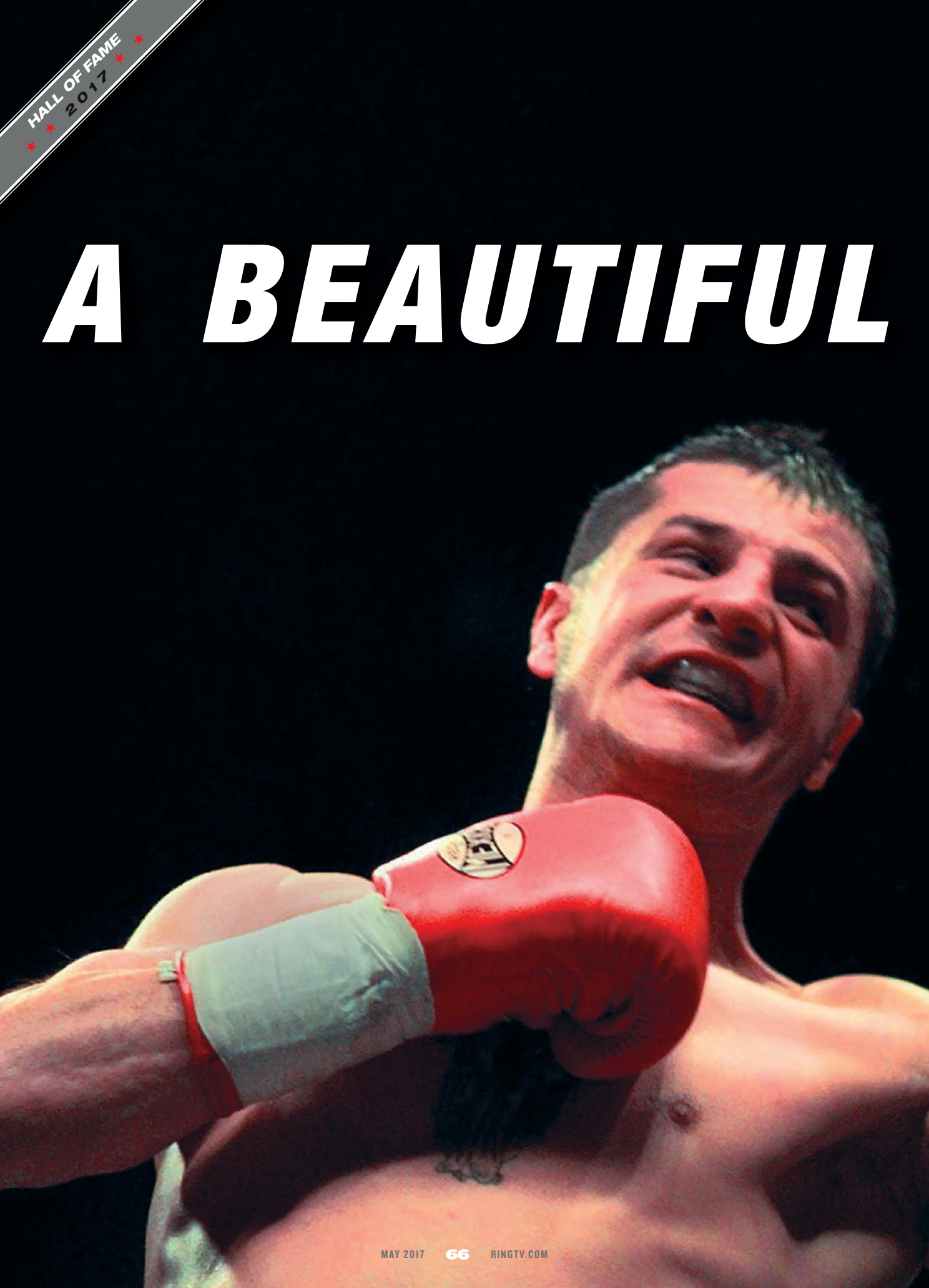
"Joe will have a job and a pension and something to always fall back on. It's reassuring. When it comes time to fight, Joe will take the time off like he usually does and he'll be ready. We found Joe like he found us.

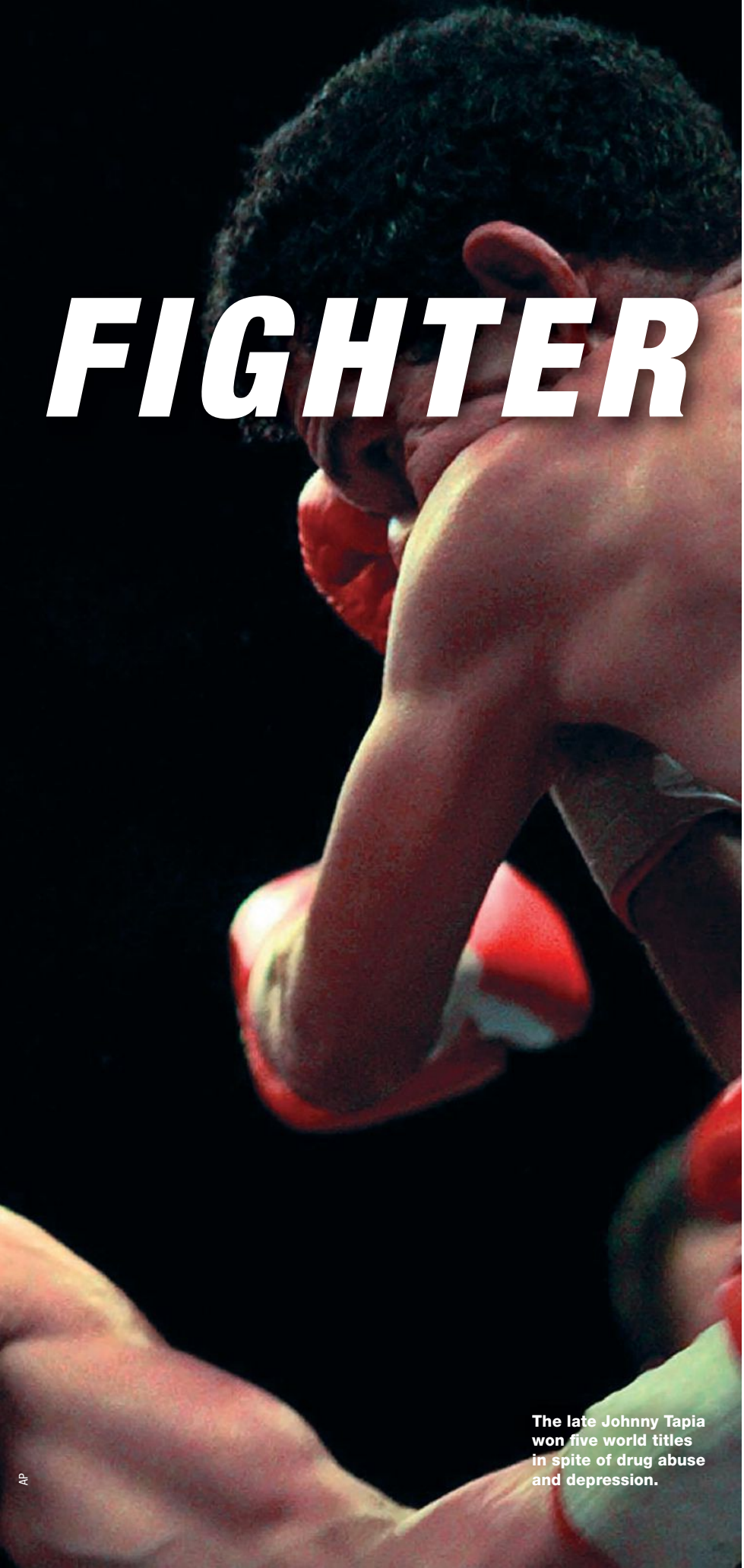
"Joe's keeping me young, that's for sure. But this is an exciting time and the future seems to be his. I always told Joe, if he listens and dedicates himself, he's going to be a world champion one day. He's pretty close right now." RING

Bernard Hopkins' career came to a dramatic end at the heavy hands of Smith.

HALL OF FAME 2017

A BEAUTIFUL





FIGHTER

The late Johnny Tapia won five world titles in spite of drug abuse and depression.

AP

JOHNNY TAPIA IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS 'VIDA LOCA,' BUT HE WAS AN EXCELLENT BOXER

By **Don Stradley**

"I'd soak up all the love of the crowd, my arms raised in the ring, and then I'd go home and crash deep into darkness, a darkness I can barely describe. Pain and emptiness and depression. And that's when the call of the addiction would come right back on me."

— "Mi Vida Loca, The Crazy Life of Johnny Tapia"

When it comes to the bittersweet, few things can match a posthumous induction at the International Boxing Hall of Fame. We wish Arturo Gatti could've been there for his induction. He would've had fun teasing the critics who didn't think he belonged there. And Hector Camacho would've had a great time; he'd have chosen something special to wear, maybe a gladiator's helmet.

Continuing in this vein, the fighter we'd most like to see on the podium is the late, great Johnny Tapia. He'll be enshrined this June as part of the 2017 class. Tapia would be modest. He'd be gracious. He'd be moved, because Johnny Tapia loved boxing as few others do.

We can easily imagine him taking part in the Sunday morning motorcade. He'd sit humbly with his wife and his three sons, waving to the crowd of well-wishers lined up along the sidewalk. He'd have a funny look on his face, as if to say, "I'm just a little guy from Albuquerque. What's all the fuss about?" But he'd love seeing the other fighters, and he'd say it was an honor to be in their presence. He'd love seeing Marco Antonio Barrera, also part of the

2017 class. They fought each other on HBO in 2002, Barrera winning on points. It was Tapia's last high-profile fight and his biggest payday. Tapia wasn't expected to win, but he made Barrera work for the entire 12 rounds. His gallant performance inspired George Foreman to say from his commentator's perch, "If I got 10 dollars, my last 10 dollars, to spend on a boxing match, the last boxing match I see before I'm called up yonder, I'll spend it on Johnny Tapia."

We wish we could interview Tapia one more time. He hid nothing. He talked candidly about everything in his life, going back to when he was a little boy and witnessing his mother, Virginia, being tied to the back of a truck and taken to her murder. He'd tell you all about that nightmare and how he never really woke up from it. That he compiled a record of 59-5-2 (30 knockouts), won five titles and was 17-2-1 with a title on the line becomes doubly impressive when you realize he spent his entire career suffering from drug addiction and a bottomless pit of depression.

With one last interview, what would we ask? We'd ask him about the fights. We'd ask about the one with Danny Romero, which was one of the hottest tickets of 1997. Tapia was awesome that night, boxing and clowning and sticking his jab in Romero's face, winning on points against a younger, quicker guy. Tapia was what the old-timers would've called "a beautiful fighter." Along with knowing every trick in the manual, including the dirty ones, he had a classy style; he used smart footwork, lots of head feints, an excellent command of the basics, a strong jab, a sneaky right hand, and a left hook to the body that could shake the walls of the arena. You could picture Tapia going 20 rounds with Abe Attell or Pancho Villa, the great little men of a century ago, or you could imagine him now, toe-to-toe with "Chocolatito" Gonzalez. Tapia would've held his own in any era.

Even in his later years, when he was pudgy and covered with enough tattoos to make him look like an old-

MODERN

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA

ACTIVE: 1989-2011
RECORD: 67-7 (44 KOs)
BACKGROUND: The "Baby Faced Assassin" was one of the most consistent fighters of his generation, as he won seven major titles in three weight divisions over more than two decades. And he never shied away from a challenge. He's best known for his thrilling trilogy with countryman Erik Morales, whom Barrera defeated twice, but his resume is filled with big names. He was a smart boxer with great fighting spirit, a combination that made him a fan favorite.

EVANDER HOLYFIELD

ACTIVE: 1984-2011
RECORD: 44-10-2 (29 KOs)
BACKGROUND: Holyfield was indeed the "Real Deal." He is recognized as the best cruiserweight of all time – he was 18-0 (14 KOs) at 190 pounds and was unified champion – and then became the only heavyweight to win the title four times, giving us some of the most memorable fights ever along the way. One can only imagine what he would've accomplished if he was a natural heavyweight. As it was, his blend of ability, ferocity and resilience made him one of the best ever.

JOHNNY TAPIA

ACTIVE: 1988-2011
RECORD: 59-5-2 (30 KOs)
BACKGROUND: Tapia, who died at 45 in 2012, is known for living on the edge outside the ring. That's where his nickname – "Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)" – comes from. The craziness sometimes eclipses his remarkable ability and warrior mentality, though – he won major titles in three divisions in entertaining fashion. Tapia was a good athlete and excellent technician who loved to fight, all of which made him very difficult to beat and a major attraction during his peak.

OLD-TIMER

EDDIE BOOKER

ACTIVE: 1935-44
RECORD: 66-5-8 (34 KOs)
BACKGROUND: Booker was among the best on an all-too-long list of black fighters who received relatively few opportunities in boxing. He made the most of the ones he got, though, mostly on the West Coast. "Black Dynamite" was a superb boxer – particularly his defensive skills – but wasn't afraid to mix it up when he had to. He proved it against some of the best fighters of his era, beating Lloyd Marshall, Holman Williams and the legendary Archie Moore, among others. He never fought for a world title but those who saw him fight know how special Eddie Booker was.

NON-PARTICIPANT

JIMMY LENNON SR.

POSITION: Ring announcer
BACKGROUND: It's no secret where Jimmy Lennon Jr. got his silky voice and professionalism. Dad, who joins his son in the Hall, was a beloved announcer for more than three decades.

JOHNNY LEWIS

POSITION: Trainer
BACKGROUND: Lewis is a boxing institution in Australia, as he has trained fighters there for more than a half century. Among his many proteges: Joe Bugner, Jeff Fenech and Kostya Tszyu.

JERRY ROTH

POSITION: Judge
BACKGROUND: The recently retired Nevada judge worked a reported 225 world title fights over three and half decades at ringside, making him one of his state's leading officials.

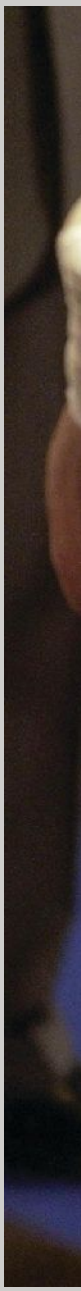
OBSERVER

STEVE FARHOOD

POSITION: Broadcaster and journalist
BACKGROUND: The former editor of THE RING Magazine is an accomplished writer, editor, historian and television analyst known for his depth of knowledge and integrity.

BARRY TOMPKINS

POSITION: Broadcaster
BACKGROUND: Tompkins has one of the most recognizable voices in boxing, as he has called some of the biggest fights in the sport since 1980. He is still going strong.



Tapia's wife said her husband "felt that boxing was like a little clique that none of us could understand."

time carnival attraction, Tapia was still something beautiful to watch. Nearly a decade after fighting Barrera, he earned a decision over Mauricio Pastrana, who wasn't an easy night for anybody. A year later, Tapia would be dead at 45, his heart giving out like an engine with too many hard miles on it.

Will we ever stop missing Johnny Tapia? Probably not.

He'd started out like a flash fire, going undefeated in his first 22 pro bouts. A failed drug test in 1990 sent him into a sort of self-imposed exile that lasted more than three years. Suspended from boxing, he made money by taking on all comers in a local bar for $300 dollars a night and a pack of beer. We'd love to interview him about those lost years and ask about those bar brawls. There's so much we want to know. And though we wish we could focus solely on the fights, we always return to Virginia Tapia Gallegos and how her death impacted her son's life.

For instance, was it his mother's death that cleared the path for Tapia's boxing career? He hadn't appeared to be a fighter in the making; he was a self-confessed mama's boy, slightly spoiled. When Virginia was murdered, Tapia was essentially an orphan – his father, though he resurfaced much later in Tapia's life, was thought to be dead – so he was raised by his maternal grandparents. Tapia's grandfather Miguel had been a boxer and was soon teaching Tapia to keep his hands up and his chin down. Tapia's older cousins would force him into fighting bigger kids in the street and bet on the outcome. Tapia would later say, "I was raised as a pit bull."

It's hard to imagine Tapia's mother letting her precious boy fight in the street like a dog. We'd love to ask him, "Hey, Johnny, what if your mother wouldn't let you box? Would you have done it anyway?" Granted, with a grandfather who boxed, Tapia would've eventually discovered the manly art. But would it become his life's blood? Would he put so much of his soul into it? His mother's murder was obviously at the root of his personal problems, but was it also the key to his boxing career?

Examine a fighter's past and you'll almost always find some kind of sadness. Tapia's wife, Teresa, made a telling comment in an interview with BoxingBar.com a year after her husband's death.

"He would tell me that he believed all fighters are passionate about (boxing) and they fight with all their heart because they're missing something." She added, "Johnny felt that boxing was like a little clique that none of us could understand."

If boxing is, as Tapia suggested, an island of misfit toys, he served for a while as its king.

"When he was in training camp, he was as clean as can be," said Freddie Roach, one of many trainers to work with Tapia. "I never saw him give in to any temptations, though I know he had his demons and they got the best of him. But he was a great fighter,

without a doubt. When I had a chance to work with Johnny, I jumped at it because I knew he was a hard worker, and I love hard workers."

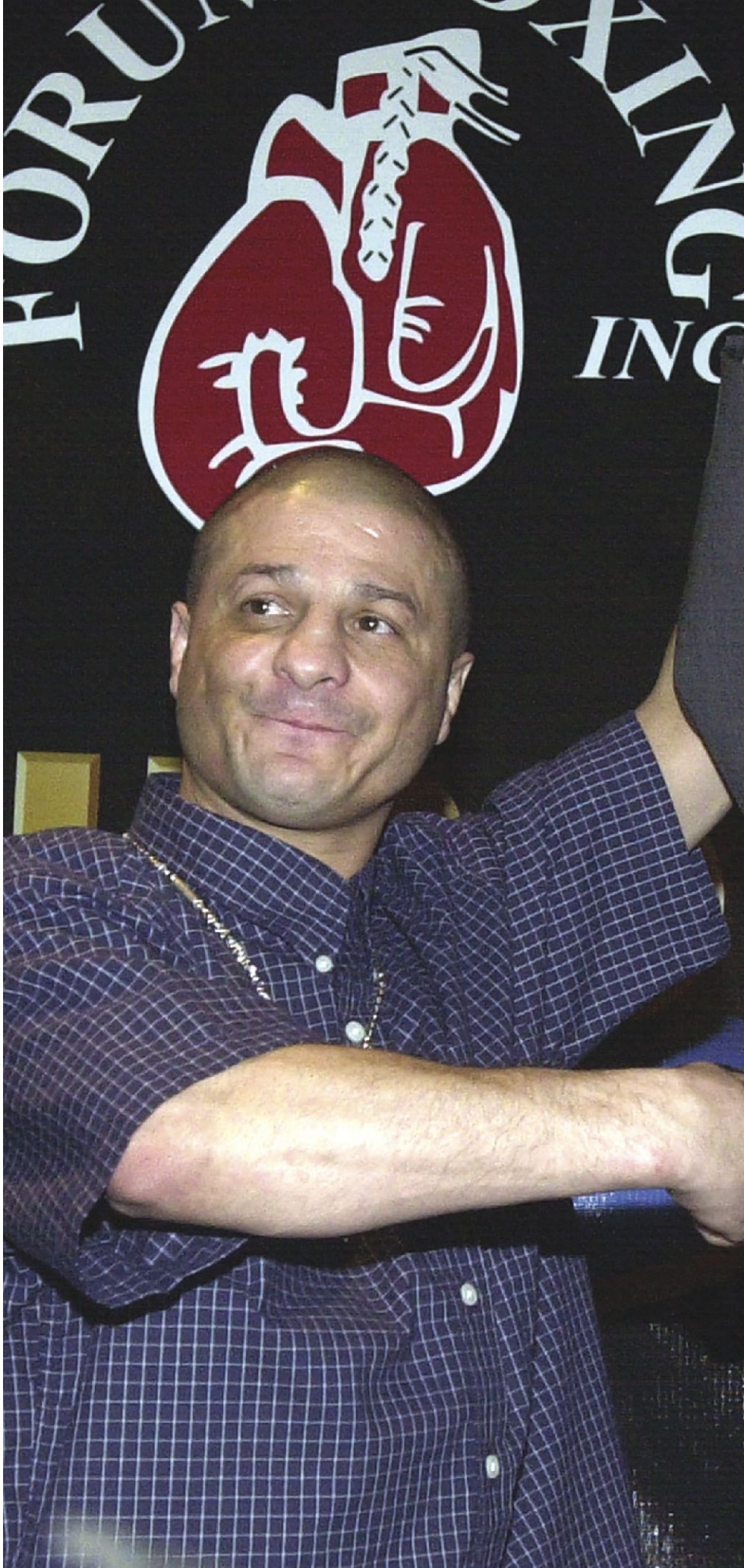
Champion of the world? Tapia wanted to be the champion of heaven and hell, and all things in between. He was undefeated in 48 bouts when he defended his WBA bantamweight belt against Paulie Ayala. The contest was chosen as THE RING's 1999 Fight of the Year, but Tapia lost on points. A rematch with Ayala appeared to go Tapia's way, but the judges again scored in favor of Ayala.

"He took those losses hard," Roach told THE RING. "They were close fights, but Johnny thought he'd won. He loved to win. The word 'loss' wasn't in his vocabulary. Sometimes his personal life got more attention than what he did in boxing, which is unfair; I had him for seven or eight fights, and I know how dedicated he was to boxing."

Tapia was also a great community man. He often made himself available to kids, warning them to avoid the mistakes he'd made. Prior to a bout with Jorge Eliecer Julio, he joined forces with the Albuquerque Metro Crime Stoppers to help create a "Guns for Tickets" program. Tapia won the WBO bantamweight title that night, but seemed just as pleased that 57 guns had been turned in. On another occasion, Tapia saw an old man being mugged; he ran in to help, slugging the robbers until they saw stars.

But even at the best of times, Tapia's "vida" remained "loca." There were ongoing drug problems, overdoses, encounters with the police, suicide attempts, prison time and mental breakdowns. Doctors declared Tapia dead on five occasions. Yet no one ever recalls Tapia being mean or hostile. His interior battles were his own; he kept them separate from the boxing world that he adored.

"He was great," said Roach. "I had a lot of fun with him. My favorite Johnny Tapia story was when I was talking to him between rounds of a fight. I can't recall the opponent, but



Tapia will enter the Hall of Fame in the same class as former foe Marco Antonio Barrera (right).

Johnny was getting away from the game plan. He wasn't listening to me, so I slapped him in the face to get his attention. Then he listened to me, and won the fight. When it was over, I went to shake his hand. He wouldn't do it. I said, 'What's wrong? You won't shake my hand?' Then he slapped me. He said, 'Now we're even.' He was a real character."

Near the end of his life, Tapia was working with young fighters. He seemed happy. Had he finally knocked the demons back? We'll never be certain.

As for Tapia's legacy, he was one of the great fighters of the 1990s. He was Albuquerque's hero. Out of the ring? Read "Mi Vida Loca, The Crazy Life of Johnny Tapia." It's as good a memoir as you'll ever read from a fighter.

"Four times they wanted to pull life support," Tapia wrote of his many brushes with death. "And many more times I came close to dying. But I have lived and had it all. I have been wealthy and lost it all. I have been famous and infamous. Five times I was world champion. You tell me. Am I lucky or unlucky?"

He'd probably say something similar in Canastota, New York, this June. We wish he could be there. We can almost hear his acceptance speech. He'd say something about his mother; he'd thank Teresa for her patience; he'd praise boxing.

We'd love to have a word with him when it was over. We'd ask, "Hey Johnny, what was your greatest night in the ring? What does all this mean to you?"

Then again, maybe we'd just back off and leave him alone, let him be with his family. Maybe we'd just congratulate him. We'd say, "You deserve to be inducted." And we'd say thanks for the memories, Johnny.

You were a beautiful fighter.

ANTHONY JOSHUA AND THE HATERS

NEWS THAT THE HEAVYWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER VISITED A MOSQUE GENERATED A DISTURBING RESPONSE

By **Thomas Hauser**

Earlier this year, IBF heavyweight titleholder Anthony Joshua was in Dubai as a tourist. As Joshua later explained, "One of my best friends is a Muslim, and we went to the mosque. It was afternoon prayer, so I asked him to pray for me ahead of the (Wladimir) Klitschko fight. He asked me to join in, and I joined in, and someone took a picture. I took it from Instagram and posted it."

Accompanying the photo, which Joshua posted on his own Twitter and Instagram accounts, the fighter wrote, "Besides luck, hard work & talent… Prayer is a solid foundation. It was nice to join my brother as he led through afternoon prayer."

Joshua is not a Muslim. He has said in the past that he doesn't follow the teachings of any one religion but has an interest in faith. After posting the photo, he was on the receiving end of a torrent of cyber-abuse. In response, Joshua said, "One of my idols in the boxing industry [Muhammad Ali] is Muslim. I didn't think it would have the backlash. Religion is supposed to be a positive thing. It's a shame it had that backlash, but I can't control how people think. As long as my intentions are pure, that's what counts."

Joshua's experience brought back memories of my own visits to mosques with Muhammad Ali.

My parents were Jewish, but I was raised with values that have a secular foundation. I consider myself more spiritual than religious. Prayer, in my view, isn't about asking the Creator to make my wishes come true. True prayer, to my way of thinking, is a moment of reflection about oneself and asking, "Am I doing all that I can do to become a better person? Am I using this precious gift of life in a way that justifies what has been given to me?"

There have been times when I've walked into a church and sat alone in a pew to contemplate these questions in a spiritual setting. I've also done it in temples, in natural surroundings … and in mosques with Ali.

The first time I went to a mosque with Ali was in Chicago. Before the service began, Muhammad told me, "When we say our Islamic prayers, you can say your Jewish prayers. Only don't say them out loud because it might offend someone."

On another occasion, we were at my apartment in New York and visited a mosque a block from where I live for a Friday morning service. The hundreds of people there were enthralled by Ali's presence. Then we went back to my apartment for lunch and Muhammad told me, "I thought about inviting everyone back here for lunch, but I figured you wouldn't like that."

My most memorable visit to a mosque with Ali took place in 1991 at the Grand Mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia. Word spread that Ali was there, and a crowd estimated by authorities at 200,000 surrounded the mosque. When the service was over, a vehicular military escort was necessary to transport Muhammad through the throng back to our hotel.

The world needs more interfaith attendance at religious services, not less.

Author Thomas Hauser visited the Grand Mosque of Jakarta, Indonesia, with Muhammad Ali in 1991.

IF WALLS COULD TALK

A COMPELLING PERSPECTIVE OF THE ICONIC GLEASON'S GYM THROUGH THE EDUCATED EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHER **LUC KORDAS**

The mementos in the office of Gleason's owner Bruce Silverglade speak to the history of his famous gym.

AP

Officials set the stage for an amateur competition in the gym.

Editor's note: New York-based photographer Luc Kordas was hired in 2015 by a Polish magazine to shoot the iconic Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn, New York. He shares the experience and his striking images here.

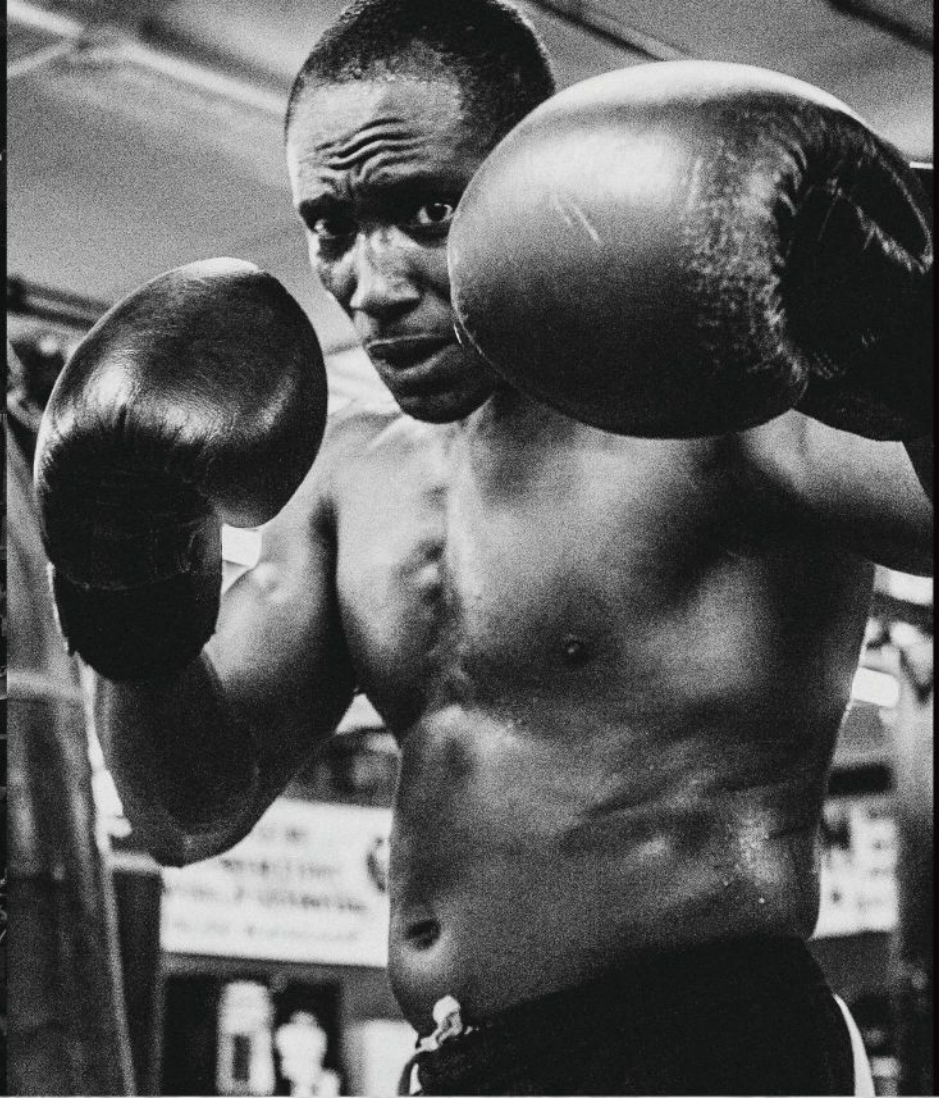
It's hard to believe that what was billed as the Fight of the Century – Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Manny Pacquiao – took place almost two years ago. Many of us lived through the long, exciting build-up to the event day by day, checking regularly on news updates, feature stories, columns by experts, rumors, anything we could find. We all had a favorite, we all had our opinions.

The fight generated enormous interest not only in the U.S. but also worldwide, including Poland. Two months prior to Mayweather-Pacquiao I was contacted by the now-defunct Polish sports magazine Champion and asked whether I'd be interested in producing a photo essay and story on one of the oldest boxing gyms in the U.S., Gleason's, in the Dumbo neighborhood of Brooklyn. Being very much into sports, I happily accepted the assignment. After contacting the manager of the gym and paying the required fee to shoot photos freely (instituted to generate income in light of the many requests to collect images there), I was all set to start the work.

I photographed the gym for a month, appearing at different times of day for a couple of hours at a time, as well as attending a couple of amateur competitions. For my first visit, I chose to arrive shortly before the doors open, at 5 a.m. Since I lived in Harlem, that meant getting up at 3 a.m. on a cold March night.

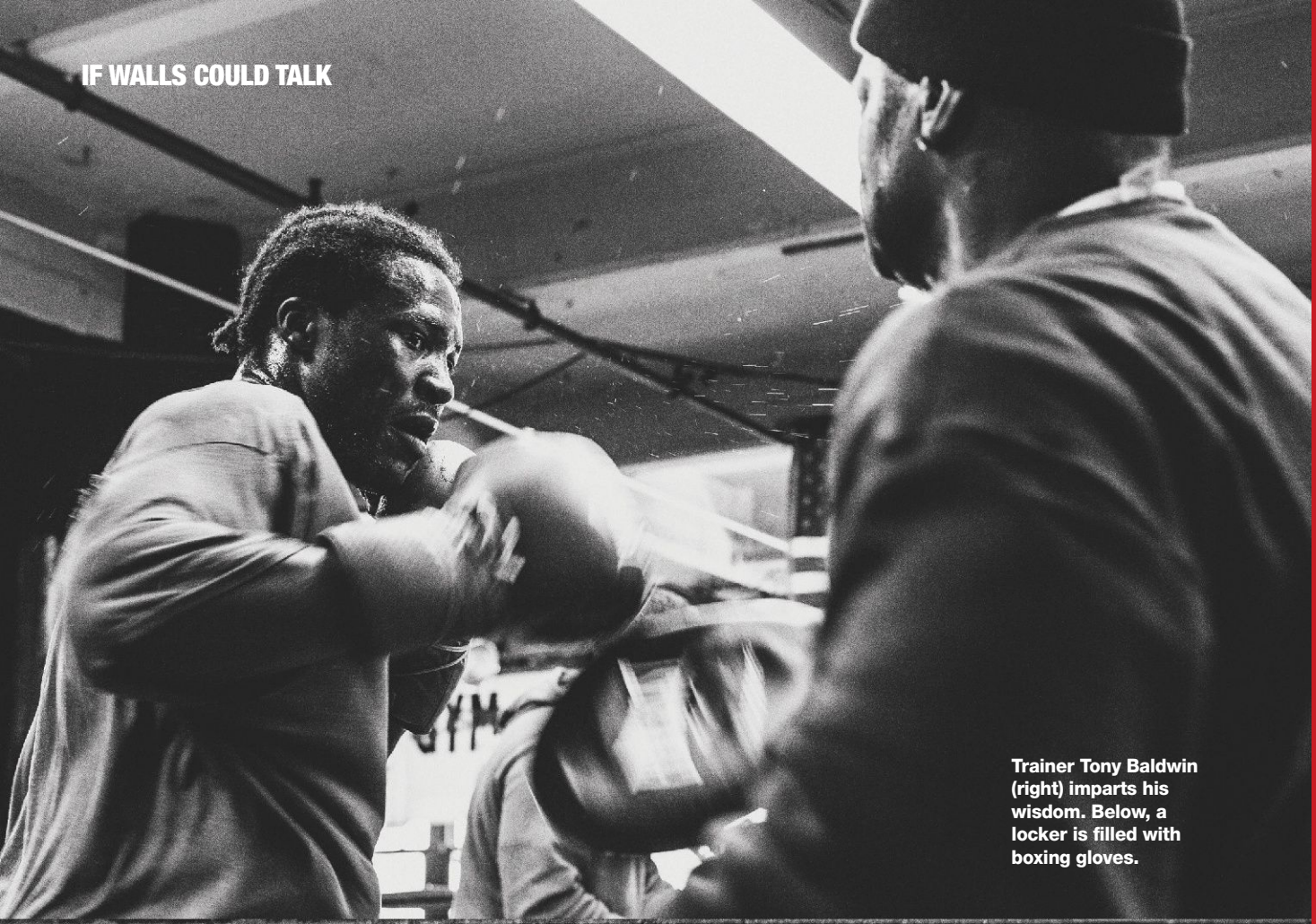
During my time at Gleason's I photographed everything that caught my eye – pro boxers, amateurs, coaches, kids, equipment and locker rooms. I spoke to the Gleason's team and met the regulars who call it home, just as current and past world champions have since the gym's first incarnation in 1937. And of course I ran into the two great Gleason's legends: owner Bruce Silverglade and head trainer Hector Roca, who have been in the boxing game for decades.

The job got easier after the initial getting-to-know-each-other period, when not everybody wanted to be photographed. Indeed, I felt more at home every time I returned. The experience was something to remember, the gym's atmosphere created not only by the daily routines, the smell, the light, the equipment, but also by a space filled with history. Hundreds of medals, awards and photos on the walls of the main office – tributes to such past champions as Mike Tyson and Jake LaMotta – are evidence of the gym's rich history. RING



Left, a boxer poses for a portrait between training sessions. Below, he shadowboxes.

GLEASON'S VIDEO
To view the video that accompanies this photo essay, click on the QR code or go to bit.do/gleasons-video.



Trainer Tony Baldwin (right) imparts his wisdom. Below, a locker is filled with boxing gloves.

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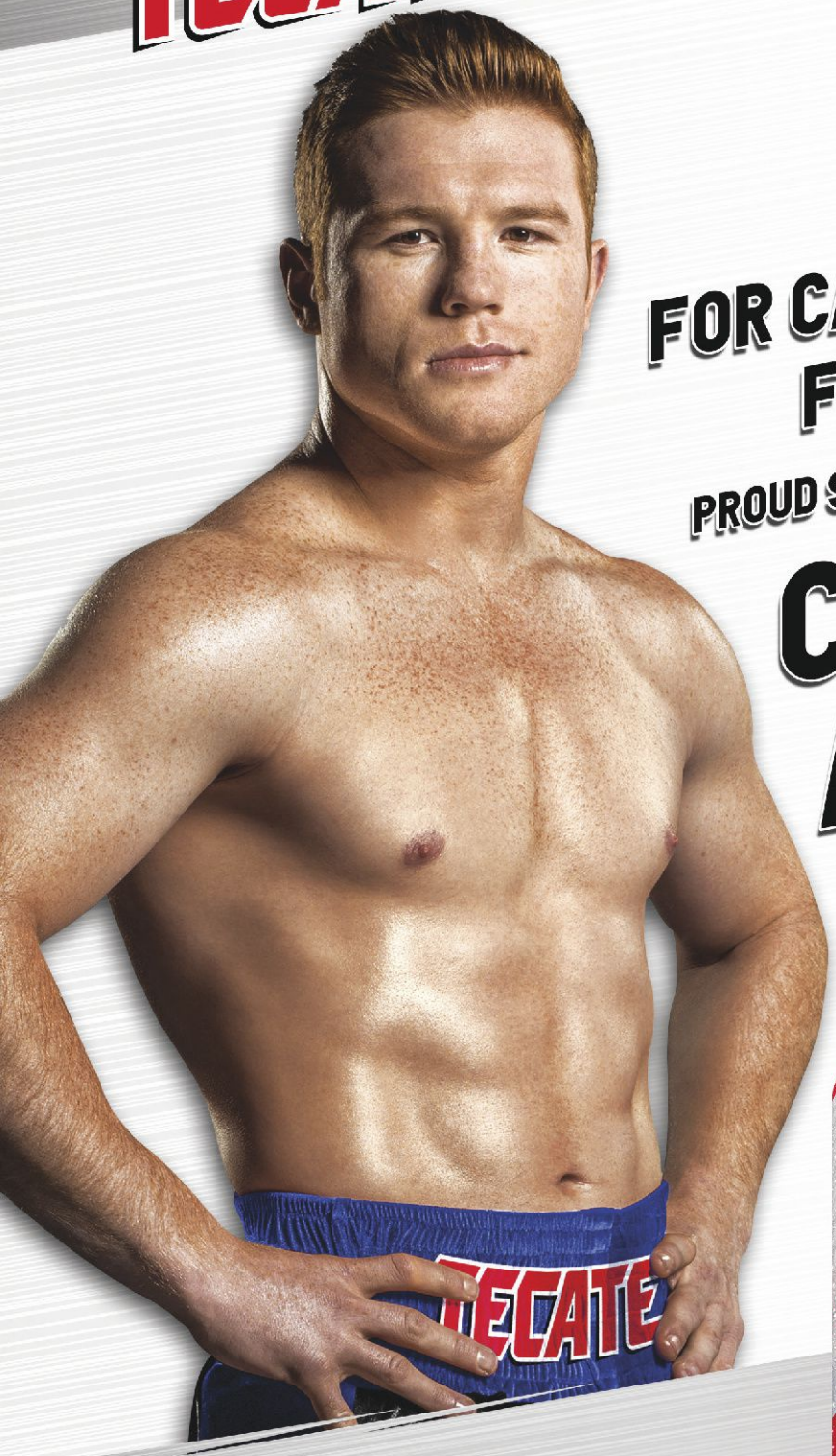

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GENERATIONAL SCRAP

CHRIS EUBANK JR. LEADS THE GROWING NUMBER OF SONS WHO ARE FOLLOWING THEIR FATHERS INTO THE RING

Chris Eubank Sr. (right) discouraged his son – Chris Eubank Jr. – from boxing until he saw the boy could handle the rigors of the sport.

There's a huge generational shift going on in the United Kingdom. Fathers and sons. Why do so many sons follow fighting fathers into the ring? It beggars belief at times. In the past month, it has been a recurring theme in conversations with some of the leading names from the past three decades from over here.

"History is repeating itself," said Chris Eubank Sr. when his son won the lightly regarded International Boxing Organization super middleweight title against a little-known Australian, Renold Quinlan, in February at London Olympia, which we will get back to in a moment.

Back in the early '90s, the World Boxing Organization was a fledgling organization. And it was Eubank Sr. making 17 defenses of the 160- and 168-pound titles on network television over a period of four years, which helped put the WBO on the map.

History again? Repeating itself in more ways than one?

It's worth noting that there is a third party behind the formidable Eubank and son axis: wizened cornerman and trainer Ronnie Davies, a constant through each fighter's career. Davies, who is 70 years old and has been in boxing since he was in short trousers, offered an almost frightening breakdown of the young man who put opponent Nick Blackwell into an induced coma just over a year ago.

Could junior be as good as senior, a former two-weight world champion? "Without a doubt. I've known him since he was a baby," Davies told me. "I'm with him 24/7 and he could go on to be one of the very best this country has ever produced. And I've been in this game a very, very long time. He's a good kid, a great fighter. He's got the same ability as his father, he's phenomenal. And he's utterly ruthless, vicious at

Chris Eubank Jr. is like his father in that he brings a strutting arrogance into the ring.

times. It's hard to hold him back. He's a freak physically."

Davies believes Eubank will be at his most effective at 168 pounds, but not as a knockout artist. "I've wanted him to step up for a year," Davies said. "Going back in time, for two years I wanted Barry Hearn to step Eubank Sr. up to super middleweight – earlier than Hearn did – and Hearn always said there was no money up at 12 stone (168 pounds). But my response was, 'put him up there and they will follow.' And that's what happened. It will be the same with junior. … A buzz will follow him wherever he fights."

Eubank Sr. was noticeably electrified and elated minutes after his son won the IBO belt. He was glowing, and it was genuine. I've never seen him look so happy. He reckons it was one of the greatest moments of his life. Fascinating, really, for a father who never really wanted his son to box. But now he does. And we are witnessing exactly why.

Eubank Jr., like his father, brings a strutting arrogance and an X-factor and entertainment that fans clearly enjoy. How good he will go on to be will be determined against potential opponents he and his father are now calling out, from Gennady Golovkin to James DeGale, and so on. But there was something fitting about this return to Olympia, a 130-year-old venue in West London covered by a huge span of iron and glass.

The hallowed old hall has played host to performances from the most bizarre to the most brutal. Back in the '60s, in the first few weeks of each year, some of prizefighting's great British attractions displayed their boxing artistry at the venue. Among them was Howard Winstone, the fine world featherweight champion, and also the popular heavyweights of the day, namely Billy Walker and Brian London.

On these occasions, in the great hall, the rings were set up in the middle of Bertram Mills' world famous circus, where a traveling band of performers, artists, animals and Coco the Clown had been camped throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

When the boxing crowd created a cacophony of noise for Walker, Winstone, et al., the lions in their cages could be heard roaring back in response. Well, the crowd lionized Eubank, cheering him into the ring as he descended steep steps, greeting his roll of the shoulders during the fight, chanting "Eeeuu-bank" at his every success and no doubt wishing for bigger nights ahead.

Both before and after the fight, I found myself in compelling conversations with Eubank Sr., whose name still has huge resonance with the British public. He was and remains a peacock for self-publicity. He was a genuine household name in his day. Reviled and revered. He played the game brilliantly. And there is still ingenuity in his moves.

Eubank reiterated to me that he never wanted his son to box. We can theorize as much as we like about nature or nurture being the magnetic pull that draws sons to follow fathers through the ropes, but boxing history is replete with the continuance from generation to generation. Prizefighting remains the toughest sport on earth, with no hiding place. It's an unforgiving business. Sons wanting to prove that they are cut from the same cloth, I suspect, is a dark, deeply psychological process. And there are many more failures

than there are successes.

Eubank Sr. was leery about his son entering a business he once labeled "a mug's game." The eccentric former fighter told me that he had "actively discouraged" Eubank Jr. from going into boxing. He deliberately created hardship for the growing lad, made him box heavyweights in Cuba, sent him to the United States to be roughed up in gyms. But what Eubank did was simply toughen up his son in the best way possible.

"I didn't realize my son had been watching the love and respect that I have always got. He's always been watching that. This is what must have inspired him to want a little bit of what dad has," reckoned the former titleholder. "I gave him nothing but hardship. I gave him tasks supposed to break him. He came through those tasks. That's a severe type of love. Get them hurt so that nobody else can hurt them in the ring. If I can get them beaten up by heavyweights and they can accept it, I know they'll be OK with these normal fighters."

Pushy parent? Yes, probably, but a caring one, too, in an obtuse way. Eubank's success over a quarter of a century ago, like many fighters before him and like his rival Nigel Benn, was born of hardship. Benn's two sons, Conor and Harley, are both beginning their journeys in the ring. Eubank has had to manufacture adversity for his son, who does possess genuine talent and could yet become a leading fighter.

"We are simply the best," preened Eubank with every word. "We are fierce and unrepentant in terms of our flair and in regards to our relentlessness. We do not apologize for being this way. This is what you want. This is what you wanted. This is what you may have even dreamed about. And we have the goods to show you. And we're going to show it to the biggest audience in the U.K."

There are more, too, like this right now. Ricky Hatton and his son Campbell, who is 16, are developing in a similar way. "Campbell loves his boxing. It does make me proud," The Hitman told me. "He fights exactly like me. Doesn't throw a jab or move his head; he gets stuck in when he fights. I'm very proud of him. He's boxing off his own back. He lost his first couple of fights, but he has shown the character to lose a few and come back. He'll need that character in life. Sixteen is a tricky age for kids, and I'm so glad to see him so disciplined, and I'm very proud of him." It will be interesting to follow the narrative of that story.

Lennox Lewis, the former undisputed world heavyweight champion, may soon find himself in the same predicament. He revealed to me that his son, Landon Claudius Lewis, has just started boxing. He is a mere 12 years old. And Big Daddy is proud.

"He's already a big kid. I daren't tell you the size of his feet," purrs one of heavyweight boxing's modern greats. "If he does become a boxer, I would want be his trainer. I would need to show him the ropes. He's been around boxing, and it's in his blood." Surely Lewis would be better served putting a golf club or a tennis racket in Landon's hand or pointing those giant feet toward the NBA instead of holding the pads for him in the gym? Or perhaps, like young Eubank, encouraging him to use his athleticism elsewhere would only backfire and serve as a magnetic lure into a prizefighting ring.

And finally ... **Nicola Adams,** the double Olympic flyweight champion, became the last of the three highest-profile women's world amateur boxing stars to turn professional. She pledged to bring the sport "to new levels" amid much fanfare.

Adams follows Ireland's Katie Taylor and American Claressa Shields into the pro ranks and will make her debut on April 8 in Manchester before a bout in her home city of Leeds on May 13. Her ambitions are high, as might be expected of a champion who has "the grand slam" of women's amateur accolades – Olympic, world, Commonwealth and European titles. She's 34, though, and my fear is that her style may not suit the professional ranks. Not in terms of winning but in terms of thrilling.

"We saw what Ronda Rousey did for women by coming into mixed martial arts and the UFC from judo in the Olympics, and I'd like to do the same for women's boxing," she said in London.

Fascinating times. Cheers.

TOP 10

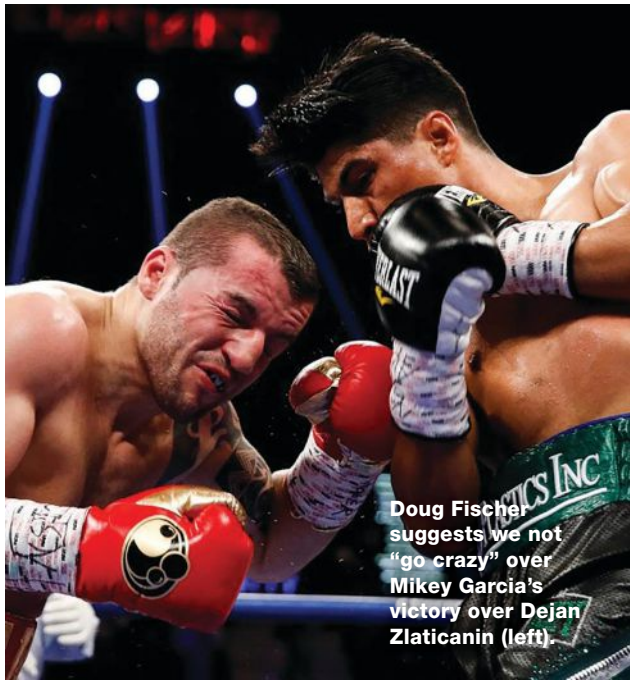
1. CARL FRAMPTON
2. KELL BROOK
3. AMIR KHAN
4. LEE SELBY
5. JAMES DEGALE
6. JAMIE MCDONNELL
7. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
8. SCOTT QUIGG
9. CALLUM SMITH
10. TONY BELLEW

11-15: Terry Flanagan, Chris Eubank Jr., Ricky Burns, Anthony Crolla, Anthony Joshua

Through fights of February 12, 2017

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The Telegraph, London.

EXCERPTS FROM THE RINGTV.COM EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN



Doug Fischer suggests we not "go crazy" over Mikey Garcia's victory over Dejan Zlaticanin (left).

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialog – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag." The following excerpts are from the February 3 and 6 editions of the Friday and Monday mailbag.

JUAN VALVERDE, from San Diego, was blown away by Mikey Garcia's WBC lightweight title-winning knockout of Dejan Zlaticanin on the Jan. 28 undercard of the Carl Frampton-Leo Santa Cruz rematch. He says Garcia looks like a young Juan Manuel Marquez "but with less mistakes," and added that the undefeated three-division beltholder would "make easy work of (RING lightweight champ) Jorge Linares if they ever fight."

DOUGIE'S reply: You're overrating Garcia and you're underestimating Linares. Garcia exhibited near-perfect technique and ring generalship against Zlaticanin, and his poise was beyond reproach, but let's not go crazy. He was in with Dejan Zlaticanin, not the prime lightweight versions of Shane Mosley or Pernell Whitaker, if you know what I'm saying. I'm not trying to piss on Garcia's parade, because Zlaticanin was a major titleholder, a highly rated 135-pounder and one tough cookie, but just keep in mind that the Montenegro native had a style and talent level that played into the Southern Californian's heavy, accurate hands. By the way, I don't recall the young Marquez making any mistakes.

MARK, from Los Angeles, says he was "humbled" watching the January 28 HBO "Boxing After Dark" doubleheader that featured Miguel Berchelt's bloody upset stoppage of Francisco Vargas for the WBC 130-pound title and Takashi Miura's Fight of the Year candidate TKO of Mickey Roman, calling the junior lightweight wars "boxing at its best and a great start to the year." Mark, who now realizes that junior lightweight is among the deepest and most competitive weight classes in boxing, asked Fischer to "play matchmaker and go through the Top 10" and share what he would "advise each fighter to do next."

DOUGIE'S reply: Interesting request. Here's my "matchmaker advice" for the Top 10 junior lightweights (using THE RING's rankings), starting from the top:

Vasyl Lomachenko (WBO titleholder) – Stay active, try to fight at least three times this year. After facing Jason Sosa in April, target Jezreel Corrales for late summer or early fall. Try to at least partially unify major titles before venturing into the 135-pound division. Berchelt should be on your radar if he wins his next fight or two.

Orlando Salido – Forget about Lomachenko, unless Top Rank and HBO really open up the checkbook for that rematch. You caught the Ukrainian southpaw when he was still green as a pro in the first fight and you pulled some old pro tricks to help get over on him, but it would be a different story the second time around. You don't need that in your life. Wait for the Berchelt-Miura winner or for Vargas' face to heal up and go for that HBO payday. Those are winnable fights that the public would want to see.

Corrales (WBA titleholder) – Don't be afraid to challenge Lomachenko. Your awkward athleticism could give the amateur boxing legend trouble. You proved yourself against a tremendous fighter in Takashi Uchiyama, so there's no need to be intimidated by anyone in the 130-pound division.

Berchelt (WBC titleholder) – Just do your thing, young man. You proved all the naysayers wrong by beating Vargas. You proved to yourself that you can box as well as you can punch and that you're not a frontrunner. You can go the distance. You'll need all the confidence, skill and stamina you can muster to beat back the mandatory challenge of Miura, but you can do it. And bigger fights await you. Lomachenko and Salido should be on your radar.

Miura – All you need to do right now is recuperate from your war with Roman, and then your entire world should be geared toward preparing for Berchelt. Don't bother looking past the young gun. If you beat him, you'll be a legend in Japan.

Gervonta Davis (IBF titleholder) – Don't be in a rush to take on the top fighters of this division, but don't feel like you can't hang if you are given the opportunity to do so. Your next fight should be against a former titleholder, such as Rocky Martinez or Malcolm Klassen. Rocky's a bit shopworn and both are getting old, but they're experienced, fearless and will exhibit smarter craft than Jose Pedraza did. They'll test you and give you the rounds you need to move to the next level.

Uchiyama – Don't retire yet! Maybe Corrales just has your number. Roll the dice against one of the available beltholders, including Lomachenko. You have the experience, talent and power to threaten anyone's reign, especially young titleholders like Davis and Berchelt. If Miura upsets Berchelt, go for the WBC belt in what would be a highly anticipated rematch in Japan.

Vargas – Take a long break. I don't think you need to retire yet, but I think you deserve a soft opponent in your comeback bout (a real "gimme," not just somebody whom hardcore nuts dismiss as many did Salido and Berchelt). If you feel you still have it (and your face holds up), go for one of those rematches that are on the menu (Salido, Miura, Berchelt) and give it your best shot.

Martinez – You're nearing the end of a very respectable career, and you got the most out of your abilities. No sense in rebuilding with tune-up and comeback bouts. Make yourself available to one of the newly crowned beltholders: Corrales or Davis. You might be able to force the kind of high-volume scrap that you used to excel at and you might have one more supreme effort in you.

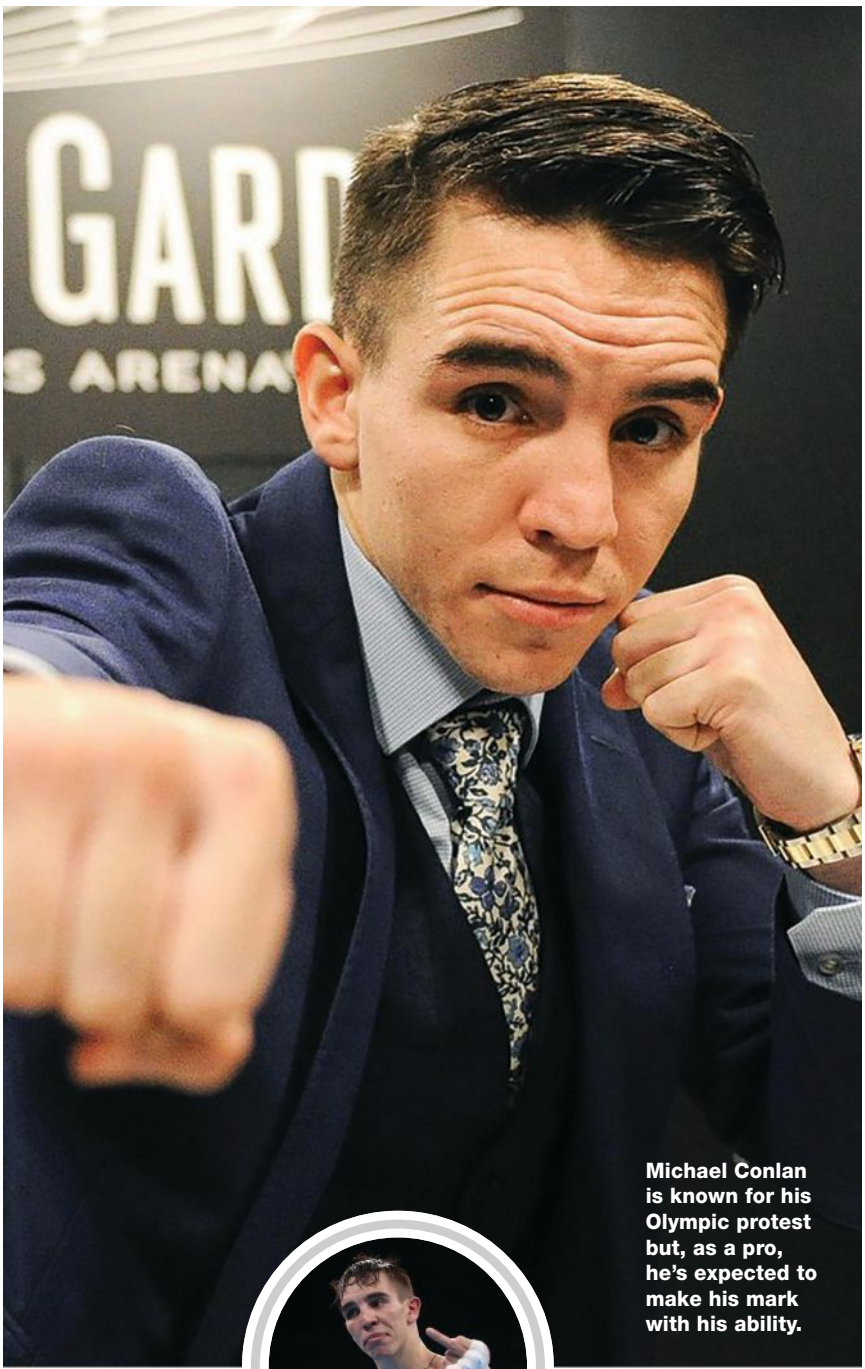
Sosa – Three words in regard to your shot at "Loma": Go for it! If you fall short, nobody with a soul will fault you as long as you give it your best effort. Target the battle-worn blood brothers – Vargas, Saldio, Miura – later in the year. They're all ready to go. Push 'em over the edge if you get the opportunity to do so. I also think you have the strength, style and experience to give Davis a run for his money.

HAYDEN, from New Jersey, asked Fischer how he envisions the Gennady Golovkin-Daniel Jacobs middleweight showdown playing out. He plans to be at Madison Square Garden for the HBO PPV event, but he's curious to hear whether Fischer thinks Jacobs poses "a legit threat."

DOUGIE'S reply: I think Jacobs arguably poses more of a threat to Golovkin's reign than any of the unified middleweight titleholder's previous challengers. The just-turned 30-year-old is the consensus No. 2-rated middleweight, behind only "GGG," for a reason. Jacobs, who has stopped his last 12 opponents, has more size and reach than Kell Brook, Curtis Stevens, Matthew Macklin and Willie Monroe Jr. He has more punching power than Daniel Geale and Martin Murray. And the Brooklyn native has sharper technique and better mobility than David Lemieux and Marco Antonio Rubio.

The main reason anyone in boxing pooh-poohs Jacobs' chances against Golovkin is because his sole pro loss was a one-punch KO – even though that setback took place SIX AND A HALF YEARS AGO. I understand some of the skepticism, but you'd think longtime observers would've have learned by now that we can't write boxers off when they suffer knockouts. Miguel Berchelt is the latest example of a talented boxer-puncher being rebuilt after a KO loss and rising to the occasion in the biggest fight of his career. Knockouts happen in boxing. So do upsets.

I think Jacobs will compete on even terms with Golovkin during the first half of the fight but I expect GGG to score a late-rounds TKO.



Michael Conlan is known for his Olympic protest but, as a pro, he's expected to make his mark with his ability.

MICHAEL CONLAN

OLYMPIAN GOES PRO AFTER TELLING AIBA OFFICIALS WHERE TO GO

Michael Conlan strode into a plush conference room on the second level of Madison Square Garden with a smile the size of the marquee outside.

Outfitted in a navy-blue suit, a tie with a floral pattern and a prep-school haircut – short on the sides, a wave on top – Conlan was surrounded by cameras as he took a seat to field questions from the media.

The former Irish Olympian is almost preternaturally confident, certain that whomever he is about to come in contact with will like him. And they usually do. He is boyishly charming; he's also mischievous.

The circumstances were a bit unusual for Conlan's appearance on this windy day in January. He was set to make his pro debut on March 17 in the main event at The Theater at Madison Square Garden, a big stage for a pro debut. But Conlan's reputation precedes him.

Conlan was there to hype his March fight but nonetheless was peppered with questions about the middle finger he gave to amateur officials at the Rio Games last summer. Conlan, a gold medal favorite, became the face of AIBA scoring problems when his quarterfinal match ended with Vladimir Nikitin of Russia having his hand raised even though Conlan deserved the victory.

What happened next would make Conlan a legend and set in motion Top Rank's decision to sign him in September. Shirtless and distraught, Conlan gave the officials a double-gun salute in the ring. He later alleged corruption, even suggesting that Russian president Vladimir Putin was involved in rigging the match.

AIBA later issued suspensions to all 36 of its referees and judges, pending an investigation

into the scoring. It also fined Conlan nearly $10,000.

"I didn't expect the reaction I got," Conlan told THE RING. "I was expecting more backlash than anything. But you know, I got a lot of good vibes from it and people were backing me 100 percent, for which I'm very grateful. I got a lot more support than negative."

Five months after the Olympics, Conlan was a world away from that experience. He grinned at his change of fortunes and shook his head at the fine doled out by AIBA for his actions.

"I just laughed because I would never pay the fine, even if it was a dollar or one pound," he said. "Not a chance in the world if it was one cent. It was laughable. They're not going to impose that fine on me."

Conlan has no interest in returning to the Olympics at a later date, which would be possible because pros are now allowed to compete in the Games.

"Never again in my life," he said. "I'll probably never watch it again, also, unless the setup with the boxing (is different), if new people are brought in. Other than that, I'll never even watch. I think they were headed in the right direction (by issuing the suspensions) until they tried to fine me. Once they brought the fine up, it seemed like they were going backwards."

Conlan, 25, also bucked the system by signing with American-based promoter Top Rank instead of someone closer to home. He is all-in on his decision to raise his profile in America, moving to Marina del Rey in Los Angeles and training with Manny Robles in Carson, California.

And he's confident he will emerge a world champion at 122 pounds.

"I'm in a stacked division with a lot of talented fighters," he said. "When the time is right I'll be there to seek those titles. And I believe that 100 percent. I don't believe there's going to be any man in the world that's going to be able to stop me. I believe the Olympic Games … it's the last loss I'm ever going to have in my career. That's my mentality: complete, superior confidence." RING

THE ESSENTIALS
MICHAEL CONLAN

Age: 25

Weight class: Junior featherweight

Height: 5 feet 8 inches (173cm)

Stance: Orthodox

Hometown: Belfast, Northern Ireland

Record: Pro debut was scheduled for March 17

Biggest strengths: A slick fighter with good head and foot movement, Conlan can punch as he moves, whether it be going backward, side to side or coming forward. He's rarely a stationary target. And when he does pause, he unfurls a piston-like jab, looping overhand rights behind it and body shots when his opponent is off-balance. He sometimes switches to a southpaw stance.

Biggest question marks: Will Conlan be able to sustain that constant movement in the pros, where the matches will be longer and more grueling? He's a perpetual blur, zipping this way and that. But in the pros he will likely have to slow down a bit and sit down on his punches; it will be interesting to see how much he will alter his style after it was so effective in the amateurs.

3 MORE TO WATCH

MIGUEL CRUZ
WELTERWEIGHT

Cruz (14-0, 11 KOs) is a big, strong welterweight who has won two straight against undefeated prospects, Sammy Figueroa last year and Alex Martin in January, both by split decisions. The 5-foot-11 Cruz, who is signed to Al Haymon, was a member of the Puerto Rican national team as an amateur and turned pro in 2012. He is 26.

RYAN GARCIA
LIGHTWEIGHT

Garcia (8-0, 7 KOs) is a former junior national champion who went 215-15 as an amateur and signed with Golden Boy Promotions last November. The hard-punching 18-year-old from Los Angeles made his Golden Boy debut on the undercard of Bernard Hopkins-Joe Smith Jr. on Dec. 17 in California, knocking out Jose Antonio Martinez in the second round.

DAGOBERTO AGUERO
BANTAMWEIGHT

Aguero (10-0, 8 KOs) signed with Marshall Kauffman's King's Promotions in January and has fought all of his bouts in his native Dominican Republic, stopping his last six opponents. Aguero's manager, Nelson Lopez Jr., plans to have the 23-year-old fight in the U.S. soon to raise his profile.

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

Holly Holm has moved on to MMA but left a strong boxing legacy.

PAUL CROCK

CALL TO THE HALL

CURRENT MMA STAR **HOLLY HOLM** HEADS THE IWBHF CLASS OF 2017

A call from the Hall of Fame typically prompts a moment of reflection. Not for Holly Holm. Instead, the latest member of the International Women's Boxing Hall of Fame is intent on making more history, this time as a mixed martial artist. So while preparing for her February bout against Germaine de Randamie for the UFC women's featherweight title, "The Preacher's Daughter" opted to use this latest honor as motivation to keep paving the way for female fighters.

"Anytime anything like that happens, I just think, 'You know what? I need to keep working,'" Holm said. "I want to keep competing. I don't want to stop now just because there's been recognition. I want to make that recognition truthful, so I want to keep doing well so it's not like, 'Why is Holly Holm nominated for that?' (Laughs.) It's a motivation to keep improving and keep going forward."

No one will ever question Holm's qualifications for the IWBHF. The soft-spoken Albuquerque native is a three-division world champion who was a remarkable 21-1-1 in world title fights over the course of an 11-year pro career, with victories over Christy Martin, Ann Saccurato, Chevelle Hallback, Mary

Jo Sanders, Diana Prazak and Anne Sophie Mathis. She was No. 5 on THE RING Magazine's 2015 list of greatest female boxers of all time. But don't talk about legacy to the 35-year-old. Not yet.

"I think about my career as a whole as fighting," said Holm, who has already solidified her fame in the Octagon by being the first to beat Ronda Rousey (who was on the cover of this magazine at the time). "I fought in boxing and I'm still fighting in MMA, and I still feel like I'm in the middle of it. I don't feel retired."

Holm is one of six IWBHF inductees. Meet the rest of the Class of 2017.

AILEEN EATON

Active: 1942-1980
Background: Though born in British Columbia, Canada, Aileen Eaton became the queen of the Los Angeles boxing scene in its heyday as the promoter at the famed Olympic Auditorium, home to some of the greatest fights and fighters of the 1960s, '70s and '80s. When she became the first woman inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2002, it was estimated that she had promoted more than 10,000 bouts over the course of her career. Eaton died in 1987 at the age of 78.

DAISY LANG

Active: 1996-2004
Record: 19-3-1 (7 KOs)
Background: Lang, born Dessislava Kirova in Bulgaria, made her name in the boxing rings of Germany, where she parlayed a successful kickboxing career into three divisional world titles at 115, 118 and 122 pounds. The crossover star – along with Regina Halmich – paved the way for the success of women's boxing in Europe. Lang went into acting following the end of her boxing career.

RIA RAMNARINE

Active: 1999-2012
Record: 14-4-1 (2 KOs)
Background: The first woman from Trinidad and Tobago to win a world boxing championship didn't walk into a gym until her late teens. But she was a quick study, not just in boxing, but in other combat sports such as karate and jiu-jitsu. Boxing was where she would make her name, though. She had a world title by 2005, defeating the talented and underrated Yvonne Caples for the WIBA strawweight crown. Ramnarine would go 2-2-1 in subsequent title fights (discounting two interim belts won), even moving up to flyweight for an unsuccessful challenge of Regina Halmich in 2006.

ANA MARIA TORRES

Active: 1999-2012
Record: 28-3-3 (16 KOs)
Background: Before women's boxing became a consistent headliner in Mexico, there was Ana Marie Torres, aka "La Guerrera." A protege of Jose Morales, father of Erik "El Terrible" Morales, Torres lost her first world-title fight to Kwang Ok Kim in 2006. But one fight later, she defeated Mayela Perez for the interim WBC junior bantamweight crown. Over the next six years, she went 14-1-2, with 12 of those wins coming in world championship bouts as she turned back the likes of Ava Knight, Jackie Nava and Alesia Graf.

ADA VELEZ

Active: 1999-2013
Record: 20-5-3 (6 KOs)
Background: Puerto Rico's first female world boxing champion was the epitome of the talented boxer who fought and beat the best but never got her just due from mainstream fight fans. The owner of wins over Melinda Cooper (twice), Mary Ortega and Leona Brown, Velez also fought to draws with Lisa Brown, Layla McCarter and Kaliesha West while winning multiple world titles at 118 and 122 pounds.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

AMANDA SERRANO
UD YAZMIN RIVAS

Returning to the Fighter of the Month winners circle is Ms. Serrano, who not only successfully defended her WBO 122-pound title with a clear-cut win over Mexico's Yazmin Rivas at Barclays Center on the James DeGale-Badou Jack undercard, but did so in a fight televised on the Showtime Extreme channel, making it the first women's boxing bout to hit Showtime since 2007. It's a little bit of history for the New York resident but likely not the last that she'll make.

POUND FOR POUND

1. **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
   Norway • 29-0 (8 KOs)
   Welterweight
2. **DELFINE PERSOON**
   Belgium • 38-1 (16 KOs)
   Lightweight
3. **YESICA YOLANDA BOPP**
   Argentina • 30-1 (12 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
4. **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
   Canada • 37-10-1 (19 KOs)
   Featherweight
5. **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
   Mexico • 28-4-3 (4 KOs)
   Flyweight
6. **ERICA ANABELLA FARIAS**
   Argentina • 24-1 (10 KOs)
   Junior welterweight
7. **IBETH ZAMORA SILVA**
   Mexico • 27-5 (12 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
8. **AMANDA SERRANO**
   U.S. • 31-1-1 (23 KOs)
   Featherweight
9. **LAYLA MCCARTER**
   U.S. • 38-13-5 (9 KOs)
   Lightweight
10. **ZULINA MUNOZ**
    Mexico • 48-1-2 (28 KOs)
    Junior bantamweight

Through fights of February 12, 2017

RINGSIDE REPORTS

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

Leo Santa Cruz's majority-decision victory set up an inevitable third fight with rival Carl Frampton (right).

LEO SANTA CRUZ MD 12 CARL FRAMPTON

Date: Jan. 28, 2017
Site: MGM Grand, Las Vegas
Division: Featherweight
Weights: Santa Cruz 125 pounds, Frampton 125
RING ratings (before fight): Frampton No. 2, Santa Cruz No. 4
Network: Showtime

They are friends and rivals, skilled and versatile. There's only one disagreement about Leo Santa Cruz and Carl Frampton: Who's better? Only a third chapter in a probable – perhaps inevitable – trilogy can answer that one.

All the reasons for a second sequel were in place, put there after Santa Cruz followed his superior reach and advice from his father, back in his corner after a battle with cancer, to a 115-113, 115-113, 114-114 victory. It was a compelling reversal of his loss to Frampton, also by majority decision, last July in Brooklyn.

"Of course, I want the rematch," said Santa Cruz, who promised it to Frampton during a post-fight embrace in the center of the ring. "I'm a man of my word and I said, if I won, I'd give him the trilogy."

About the "if," there appears to be no doubt. But the when and where loom as the proverbial devils in the details sure to be discussed in negotiations. Frampton is eager to fight at home, back in Belfast. He argues that he fought Santa Cruz (33-1-1, 18 knockouts) twice in the U.S, first in Brooklyn and then in Vegas, a few hours' drive from Santa Cruz's home in California.

"He can stay at my house," said Frampton (23-1, 14 KOs), who grew up in Belfast's Tigers Bay neighborhood.

It was a good line. But his fans' passion is no joke. They virtually turned Barclays Center into Frampton's house in the first fight. Then they landed in Vegas with flags, songs and chants that transformed the weigh-in and sections of the MGM Grand Garden Arena on fight night into scenes that sounded like a Tigers Bay pub at last call.

A third fight figures to be as close as the first two. Other than Switzerland, there's probably no such thing as a neutral site for what would probably be the decisive encounter in this featherweight rivalry. But a trip to Northern Ireland might be a career hazard for Santa Cruz, who dropped hints that there are other options for his next fight. After regaining the WBA's belt, he mentioned other titleholders, including WBC champion Gary Russell Jr. and WBO titleholder Oscar Valdez.

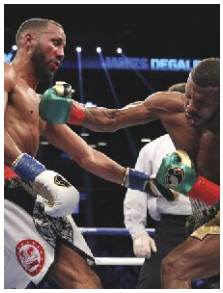
Whatever happens, Frampton says his next fight will be in Belfast. His fans, he said, cheered him up during a post-fight party at a bar, Nine Fine Irishmen, at New York-New York across The Strip from the MGM.

"They were chanting my name," Frampton said in a column he writes for Belfast Live. "It was very special, though I think they found it easier to get a drink than I did."

Frampton asked for a pint, but the bartender initially refused, saying he wasn't wearing a mandatory wristband. "I politely explained I had organized the event!" Frampton wrote.

Frampton finally got his pint from a bartender who apparently didn't know who he was. In Belfast, everybody knows his name. »

WORLDWIDE RESULTS— Go to: bit.ly/worldwide-results or scan the QR code to see weekly fight results at RingTV.com.



NO. 1 JAMES DE GALE D 12 NO. 2 BADOU JACK

Jan. 14, New York (Showtime)

A lost tooth. A bloodied referee. A lot happened. But one thing didn't. Nobody won.

Badou Jack and James DeGale fought to a majority draw in a fight that was supposed to crown a RING champion and unify the super middleweight title but left it as divided as ever.

"Treat us fair," said Jack promoter Floyd Mayweather Jr., who thought the cards – 113-113 on two and 114-112 for DeGale on one – were unfair. Fair might be a rematch, but Mayweather said Jack, who vacated his WBC title, is moving up in weight.

DeGale (23-1-1, 14 KOs) dropped Jack in the first. Jack (20-1-3, 12 KOs) returned the favor in the 12th. Knockdowns were the bookends. In between, Jack missed his opponent with a left and instead struck referee Arthur Mercante Jr., drawing blood in the fifth. Meanwhile, DeGale suffered a ruptured eardrum. He also lost a tooth, but kept his IBF belt.

GERVONTA DAVIS TKO 7 NO. 6 JOSE PEDRAZA

Jan. 14, New York (Showtime)

The first title matters more than any other and Gervonta Davis has his, a powerful symbol that validated his potential and a sure sign he can collect a closetful of belts.

"Oh man, it feels great to win my first," the 22-year-old Davis said after taking the IBF junior lightweight title from Jose Pedraza with a seventh-round stoppage.

Davis (17-0, 16 KOs) did what nobody before him could. He beat Pedraza (22-1, 12 KOs), punishing him in the sixth and dropping him with a right in the seventh for a TKO at 2:36 of the round. It was more than Pedraza's first loss; it left Puerto Rico without a male titleholder.

The victory seemingly put Davis in line for a bout with Vasyl Lomachenko. But Davis promoter Floyd Mayweather Jr. was in no hurry.

"We're not looking to unify the belts right now," Mayweather said.

NO. 1 WANHENG MENAYOTHIN UD 12 MELVIN JERUSALEM

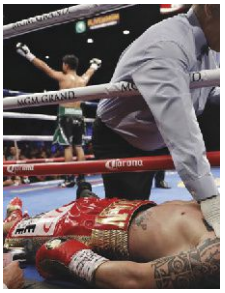
Jan 25, Phitsanulok, Thailand

He has fought under a couple of names, but his identity never changes. Chayaphon Moonsri or Wanheng Menayothin, he remains unbeaten.

That identity underwent a tough challenge against Filipino Melvin Jerusalem. Yet in the end, Menayothin emerged with the "0" still in place. Thailand's unbeaten strawweight (45-0, 17 KOs), the WBC titleholder, won a 114-113, 115-113, 114-113 decision in his home country.

If not for a penalty against Jerusalem (11-1, 7 KOs) for a low blow in the eighth round, Menayothin would have been tagged with a majority draw.

An aggressive Jerusalem, who calls himself "The Gringo," was an early surprise. The fight was even until he lost the point, allowing the experienced Menayothin to protect his narrow advantage with elusive tactics over the final four rounds and preserve his perfect record.



MIKEY GARCIA KO 3 NO. 1 DEJAN ZLATICANIN

Jan. 28, Las Vegas (Showtime)

Add scary to a resume that already included skill and smarts.

The fear factor struck suddenly and lingered long with Mikey Garcia's third-round knockout of Dejan Zlaticanin for the WBC's lightweight title.

Zlaticanin came into the bout known for his dangerous power. Turns out, he never had a chance. In only his second fight since a 2½-year layoff, Garcia (36-0, 30 KOs) – now the No. 1 challenger to RING champ Jorge Linares – landed an uppercut and then a right that might be remembered as the biggest punch of 2017.

Zlaticanin (22-1, 15 KOs) went down, on his back and as motionless as a board. An oxygen mask was placed on his face. Garcia's jubilation was suddenly supplanted by concern.

Finally, Zlaticanin got up. Garcia's first words said it best.

"Thank God, he's OK," said Garcia, who has more than just ring smarts.

NO. 6 TAKASHI MIURA KO 12 MIGUEL ROMAN

Jan 28, Indio, Calif. (HBO)

A Fight of the Year contender includes knockdowns, comebacks and, increasingly, Takashi Miura.

Miura delivered another compelling show, this time as the winner, in a 12th-round KO of Miguel Roman.

"I want these type of fights," Miura (31-3-2, 24 KOs) said after scoring knockdowns in the 10th and 11th rounds of a wild 130-pound bout that ended with a short left that put Roman (56-12, 43 KOs) flat on his back at 53 seconds of the 12th.

Miura, a former WBC junior lightweight titleholder from Tokyo, knows no other type. He was at the losing end of the 2015 Fight of the Year, a ninth-round TKO won by Francisco Vargas.

Vargas would go on to suffer his first loss, to Miguel Berchelt, after Miura's victory on the Golden Boy Promotions card. That probably eliminated a rematch, but it opened the door to another type of Miura fight against Berchelt.

MIGUEL BERCHELT TKO 11 NO. 2 FRANCISCO VARGAS

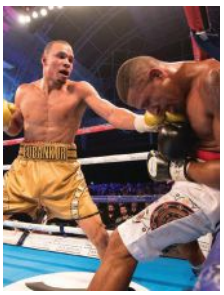
Jan. 28, Indio, Calif. (HBO)

Francisco Vargas, a fighter who has seen a lot, couldn't see much of anything at all.

After nearly 11 full rounds of carnage, Miguel Berchelt left Vargas with a bloodied left eye and a right eye that was all but swollen shut.

It was hard to see what was next for Vargas in the wake of a brutal stoppage delivered by the 25-year-old Berchelt (31-1, 28 KOs), who went beyond the seventh round for the first time in scoring a TKO at 2:19 of the 11th.

"He cut me, and I just wasn't able to see because the blood kept coming into my eyes," said Vargas (23-1-2, 17 KOs), who looked a lot older than his 32 years after losing a junior lightweight title won and defended with Fights of the Year in 2015 and 2016. "I am not the type to give in. I will always be fighting."



CHRIS EUBANK JR. TKO 10 RENOLD QUINLAN

Feb. 4, London (ITV PPV)

Chris Eubank Jr. fought a good game. Talked a better one. It was predictable on both counts against Renold Quinlan, an overmatched Australian who was as tough as he was unknown.

The only surprise perhaps is that it took so long for Eubank (24-1, 19 KOs) to finish the task by stopping Quinlan (11-2, 7 KOs) at 2:07 of the 10th round.

The talk lasted even longer than the super middleweight bout. Eubank and his dad/trainer are still talking. Quinlan will never be confused with Gennady Golovkin or James DeGale or Billy Joe Saunders. But Eubank, ranked No. 6 at middleweight, needed a prop, a springboard, to call out everybody but Marvin Hagler.

"I want the rest of DeGale's teeth," Eubank said of a potential U.K. rival who lost a tooth in a draw with Badou Jack. "I want Golovkin. I want Saunders."

Mostly, he wanted to talk.

CHRISTIAN HAMMER TKO 7 DAVID PRICE

Feb. 4, London (ITV PPV)

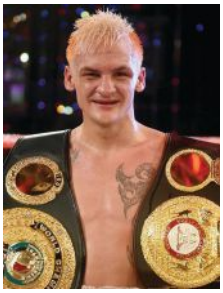
David Price finds himself in a place nobody foresees. But he's there, at the bottom of a trip from heralded prospect to social-media punching bag.

Before Anthony Joshua became a face of U.K. boxing, there was Price (21-4, 18 KOs), a designated successor to Lennox Lewis. But that was before losses to Tony Thompson (twice), Erkan Teper and now Christian Hammer.

A heavyweight once admired is now mocked in the wake of a loss to Hammer (21-4, 12 KOs), who got up from a fifth-round knockdown for a TKO of Price at 1:22 of the seventh.

Price appeared sluggish at 275 pounds, said to be 25 to 35 more than his optimum. But fatigue has long plagued Price, 2-2 over his last four and now confronted by questions about what's next.

"I don't think anybody will be angry with him if he does decide to retire," Hammer said.



NO. 9 HEKKIE BUDLER TKO 8 JOEY CANOY

Feb. 4, Kempton Park, South Africa

The considerable momentum Hekkie Budler had established between 2014 and 2016 came to a sudden end when he lost his strawweight title to Byron Rojas in March of last year.

Budler (31-2, 10 KOs) is now hoping to become Lord of the Junior Flies. He won for the second time since moving up to 108 pounds, defeating Joey Canoy (12-3-1, 6 KOs) after the Filipino failed to answer the bell for the eighth round.

The victory was noteworthy for "The Hexecutioner's" power, which was back in his first stoppage since 2014. It also reinforced the decision to return to 108, the weight at which Budler fought before moving down to 105 in 2011.

Budler trainer/manager Colin Nathan called the victory an early step in a plan to dominate a division currently led by Mexico's Pedro Guevara and Japan's Akira Yaegashi.

ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV SD 12 NO. 2 RAU'SHEE WARREN

Feb. 10, Toledo, Ohio (BounceTV)

There's not much that Rau'Shee Warren hasn't seen in a roller coaster ride through three Olympics and 16 pro fights. But there's always another unknown.

This time, it brought Warren (14-2, 4 KOs) face-to-face with Zhanat Zhakiyanov (27-1, 18 KOs), a Kazakhstani who has fought in 12 countries yet was unknown until he climbed off the canvas from two first-round knockdowns and into the bantamweight championship mix with a split-decision upset.

Who is he? His toughness is obvious. He's also a good listener who took advice from better-known trainer Ricky Hatton. He applied it for a 116-110 and 115-111 victory on two cards. The third favored Warren, 115-111, in the American's first defense of the WBA title.

"He had to get into his chest, mug him," Hatton said.

He did, setting the stage for a rematch. An angry Warren demanded one. Zhakiyanov heard him and said OK.

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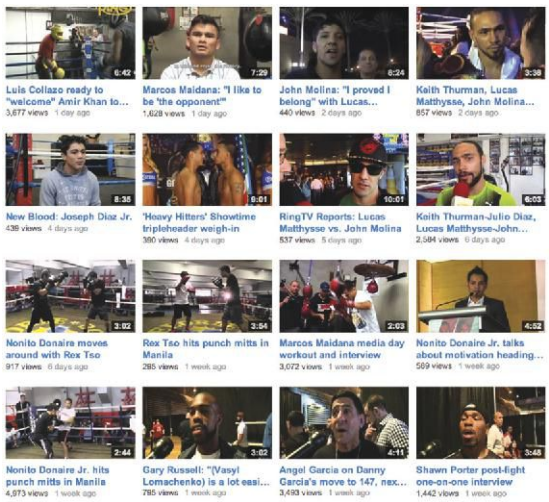

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COMING UP

Predictions are made by RING staff members Mitch Abramson, Doug Fischer, Brian Harty and Michael Rosenthal

MARCH

KEITH THURMAN VS. DANNY GARCIA

Date: March 4
Location: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Division: Welterweights (for Thurman's WBA and Garcia's WBC titles)
RING Ratings: Thurman No. 2; Garcia No. 7
TV: CBS
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Also fighting: Omar Narvaez vs. Emmanuel Rodriguez, bantamweights; Erickson Lubin vs. Jorge Cota, junior middleweights.
Significance: Thurman (27-0, 22 KOs) has been on the brink of stardom for too long. Could this finally be his breakthrough? He fought only once last year but scored an important victory, a decision over Shawn Porter. Garcia (33-0, 19 KOs) has been busy at 147 pounds but hasn't accomplished much. He, too, needs a big victory to reestablish momentum.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Thurman UD; Fischer – Thurman MD; Harty – Thurman UD; Abramson – Garcia SD

GENNADY GOLOVKIN VS. DANIEL JACOBS

Date: March 18
Location: Madison Square Garden, New York, N.Y.
Division: Middleweights (for Golovkin's IBF, WBA and WBC titles)
RING Ratings: Golovkin No. 1, No. 4 P4P; Jacobs No. 2
TV: HBO Pay-Per-View
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Also fighting: Roman Gonzalez (No. 2, No. 1 P4P) vs. Srisaket Sor Rungvisai (No. 4), junior bantamweights (for Gonzalez's WBC title); Carlos Cuadras (No. 3) vs. David Carmona, junior bantamweights.
Significance: Golovkin (36-0, 33 KOs) has built his reputation against second-tier or smaller opponents. That ends with this fight. Jacobs (32-1, 29 KOs) has the skills, power, size and experience to give Golovkin a significant test, although his chin will always be questioned because of his fifth-round KO loss to Dmitry Pirog in 2010. Golovkin has stopped 23 consecutive opponents.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Golovkin KO 9; Fischer – Golovkin KO 8; Harty – Golovkin KO 5; Abramson – Golovkin KO 6

JORGE LINARES VS. ANTHONY CROLLA II

Date: March 25
Location: Manchester Arena, Manchester, England
Division: Lightweights (for Linares' RING and WBA titles)
RING Ratings: Linares C; Crolla No. 4
TV: Showtime, Sky
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★ ★ ★ ★
Also fighting: Brian Rose vs. Jack Arnfield, middleweights; Martin Joseph Ward vs. Maxi Hughes, junior lightweights.
Significance: Linares (41-3, 27 KOs) turned in a sensational performance in the first meeting, in September, outboxing Crolla (31-5-3, 13 KOs) to win a unanimous decision and the vacant RING championship in Manchester. Crolla is skillful and tough but not as quick or athletic as Linares. The Englishman will have to make adjustments to emerge with a different outcome.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Linares KO 10; Fischer – Linares KO 11; Harty – Linares UD; Abramson – Linares UD

MARCH 2 – Shinsuke Yamanaka (C, No. 9 P4P) vs. Carlos Carlson, bantamweights (for Yamanaka's RING and WBC titles), Tokyo.
MARCH 4 – Tony Bellew (No. 3 cruiserweight) vs. David Haye (No. 9), heavyweights, London (Sky Box Office). Also, Sam Eggington vs. Paulie Malignaggi, welterweights.
MARCH 10 – Tomoki Kameda (No. 7 bantamweight) vs. Pipat Chaiporn, Tokyo.
MARCH 10 – Andy Vences vs. Angel Hernandez, junior lightweights, Lemoore, Calif. (UniMas)
MARCH 10 – "L.A. Fight Club": Christian Gonzalez vs. Romero Duno, lightweights, Los Angeles (RingTV.com and Estrella TV).
MARCH 11 – Jack Culcay vs. Demetruius Andrade (No. 6), junior middleweights, Ludwigshafen, Germany.
MARCH 11 – Gary Russell Jr. (No. 2) vs. Oscar Escandon, featherweights (for Russell's WBC title), Oxon Hill, Md. (Showtime). Also, Jermell Charlo vs. Charles Hatley, junior middleweights (for Charlo's WBC title).
MARCH 11 – David Lemieux (No. 4) vs. Curtis Stevens, middleweights, Verona, N.Y. (HBO).
MARCH 17 – Kermit Cintron vs. Walter Castillo, welterweights, Reading, Pa. (Showtime).
MARCH 17 – Julian Rodriguez vs. Eudy Bernardo, junior welterweights, New York, N.Y. (UniMas).
MARCH 23 – Jason Quigley vs. Glen Tapia, middleweights, Indio, Calif. (ESPN2, ESPN3.com). Also, Randy Caballero vs. Victor Proa, featherweights.

APRIL

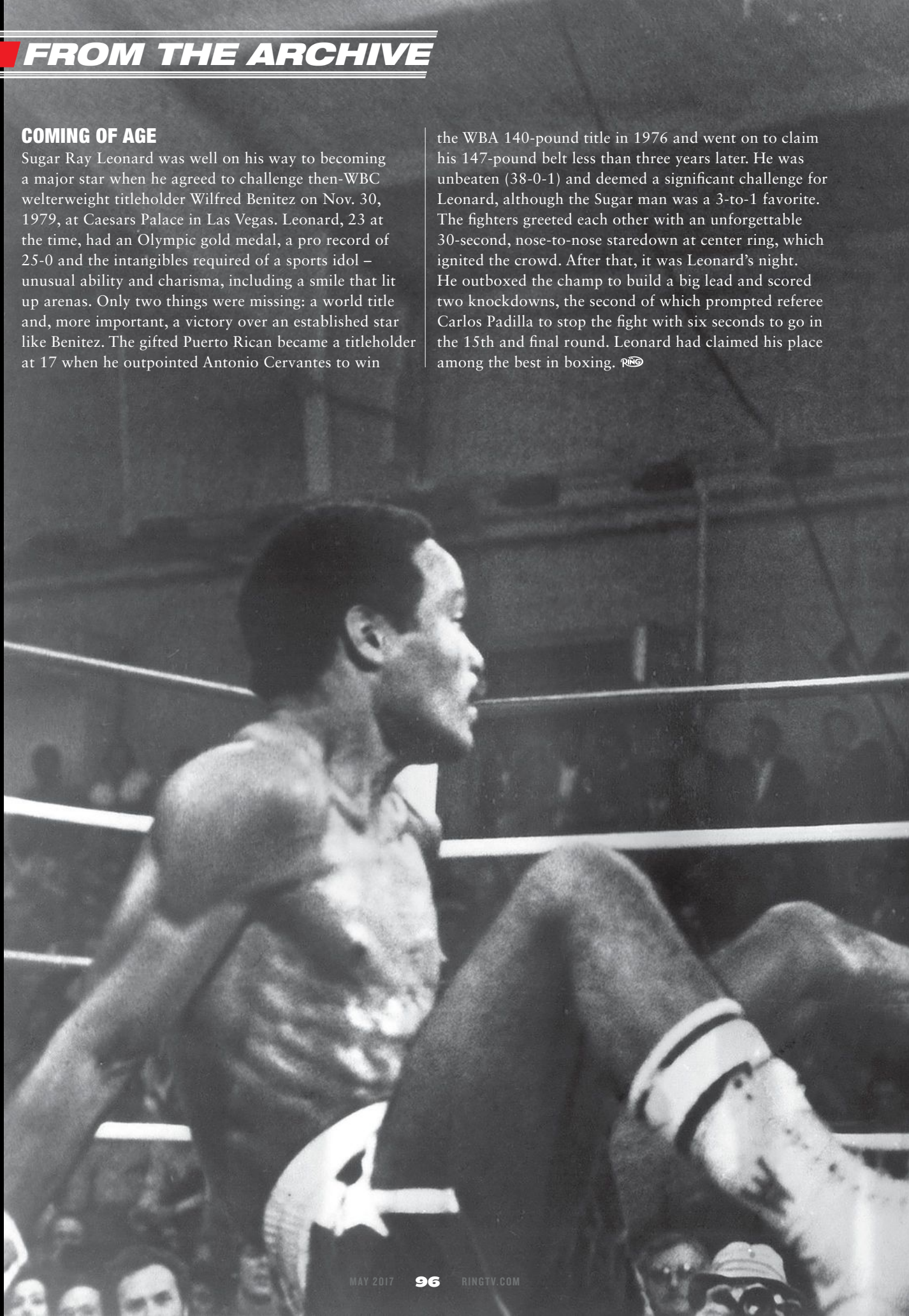
APRIL 1 – Marco Huck (No. 6) vs. Mairis Briedis (No. 7), cruiserweights, Dortmund, Germany.
APRIL 1 – Ricardo Mayorga vs. Jaudiel Zepeda, super middleweights, Managua, Nicaragua.
APRIL 8 – Terry Flanagan (No. 2) vs. Petr Petrov (No. 10), lightweights (for Flanagan's WBO title), Manchester, England. Also, Liam Williams vs. Liam Smith (No. 8), junior middleweights. And Nicola Adams vs. TBA.
APRIL 8 – Vasyl Lomachenko (No. 1, No. 6 P4P) vs. Jason Sosa (No. 10), junior lightweights (for Lomachenko's WBA and WBO titles, Oxon Hill, Md. (HBO). Also, Mike Reed vs. Reyes Sanchez, junior welterweights.
APRIL 12 – Ken Shiro (No. 10) vs. Tetsuya Hisada, junior flyweights, Osaka, Japan.
APRIL 15 – Ricky Burns (No. 5) vs. Julius Indongo (No. 7), junior welterweights (for Indongo's IBF and Burns' WBA titles), Glasgow, Scotland (Sky).
APRIL 22 – Arthur Abraham (No. 8) vs. Robin Krasniqi, super middleweights, Germany.
APRIL 23 – Manny Pacquiao (No. 4) vs. Jeff Horn, welterweights, (for Pacquiao's WBO title), Brisbane, Australia.
APRIL 29 – Anthony Joshua (No. 5) vs. Wladimir Klitschko (No. 1), heavyweights (for Joshua's IBF and vacant WBA titles), London (Sky Box Office). Also, Katie Taylor vs. TBA, lightweights.

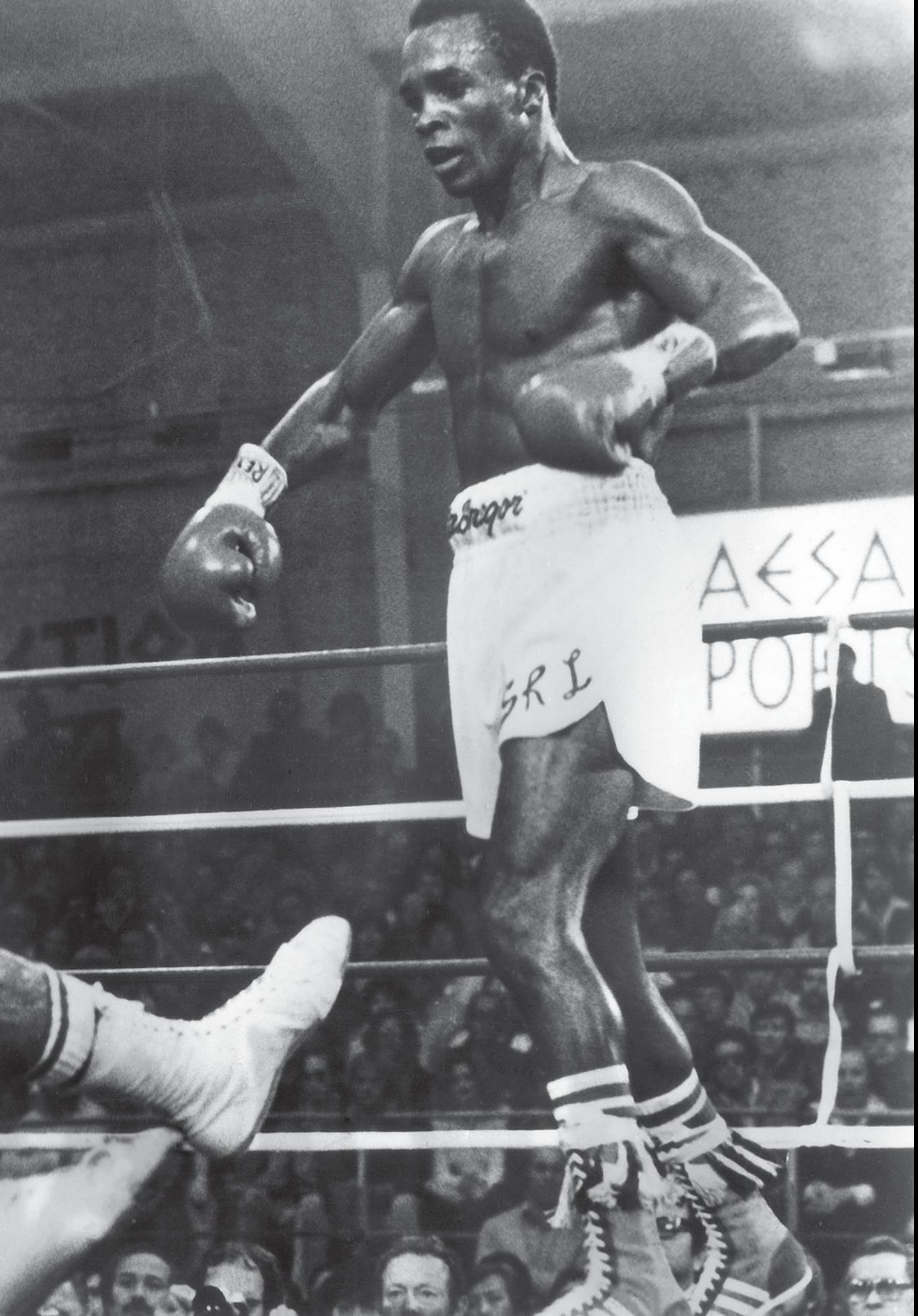
MAY

MAY 6 – Canelo Alvarez (No. 1 junior middleweight, C middleweight, No. 8 P4P) vs. Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., super middleweights, Las Vegas (HBO Pay-Per-View). Also, Lucas Matthysse vs. TBA, welterweights.
MAY 6 – Zou Shiming (No. 9) vs. TBA, flyweights (for Zou's WBO title), Macao, China.

COMING OF AGE

Sugar Ray Leonard was well on his way to becoming a major star when he agreed to challenge then-WBC welterweight titleholder Wilfred Benitez on Nov. 30, 1979, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Leonard, 23 at the time, had an Olympic gold medal, a pro record of 25-0 and the intangibles required of a sports idol – unusual ability and charisma, including a smile that lit up arenas. Only two things were missing: a world title and, more important, a victory over an established star like Benitez. The gifted Puerto Rican became a titleholder at 17 when he outpointed Antonio Cervantes to win the WBA 140-pound title in 1976 and went on to claim his 147-pound belt less than three years later. He was unbeaten (38-0-1) and deemed a significant challenge for Leonard, although the Sugar man was a 3-to-1 favorite. The fighters greeted each other with an unforgettable 30-second, nose-to-nose staredown at center ring, which ignited the crowd. After that, it was Leonard's night. He outboxed the champ to build a big lead and scored two knockdowns, the second of which prompted referee Carlos Padilla to stop the fight with six seconds to go in the 15th and final round. Leonard had claimed his place among the best in boxing.

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By **Lamar Clark**

STYLES MAKE FIGHTS

The Japanese Boxing Commission's annual awards banquet took place on Feb. 10. Pictured are: 1. The 2016 award winners; 2. Fighter of the Year, Shinsuke Yamanaka; 3. Technique Prize, Naoya Inoue; 4. Fighting Spirit Prize, Yukinori Oguni; 5. Fight of the Year, Yoshihiro Kamegai (vs. Jesus Soto Karass)

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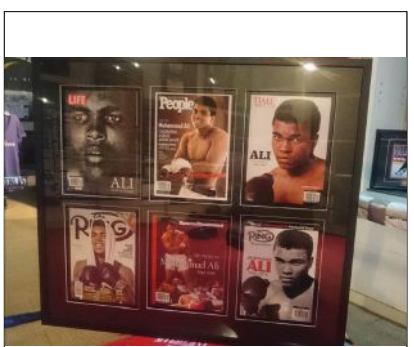

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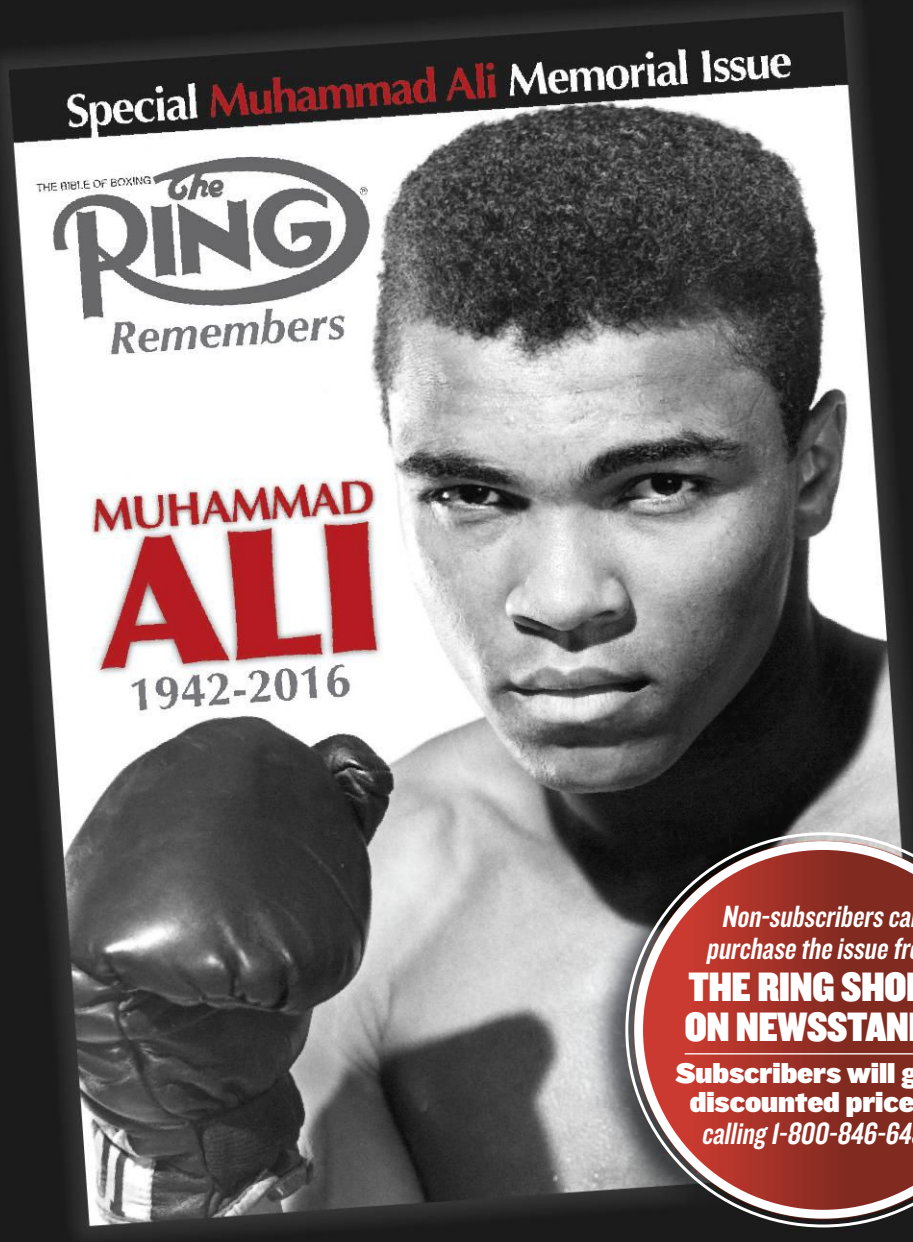

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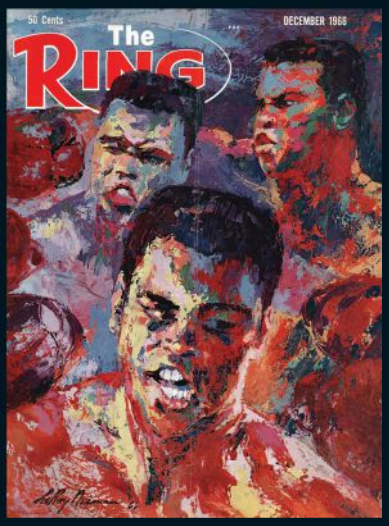
In honor of Muhammad Ali, THE RING will include a full-color pull-out poster of "The Greatest" in each of the next nine issues of the magazine. The posters are reproductions of particularly compelling RING covers on which Ali was featured.



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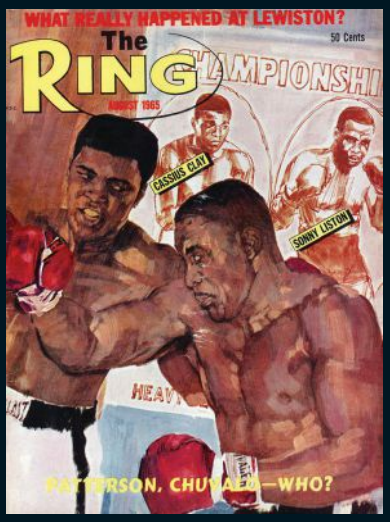

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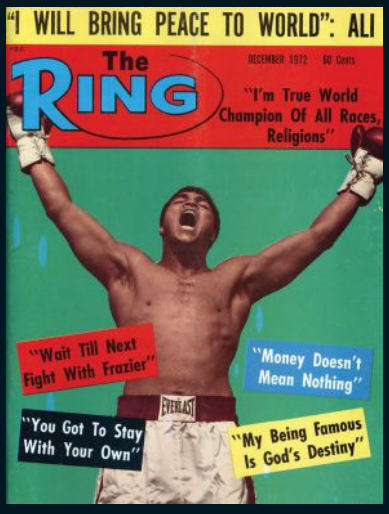

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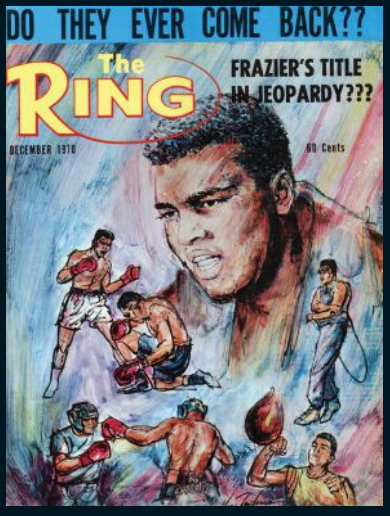

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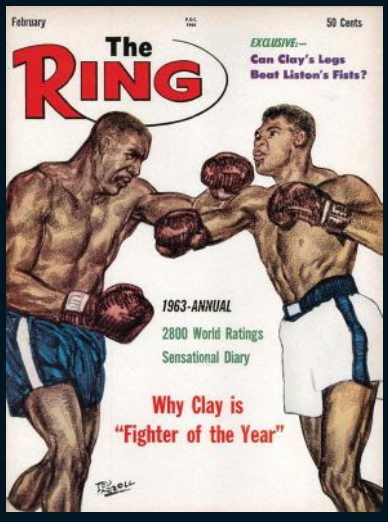

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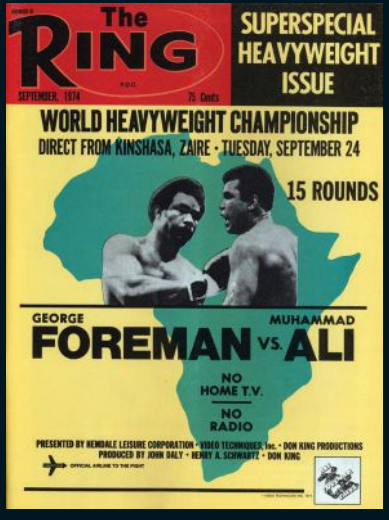

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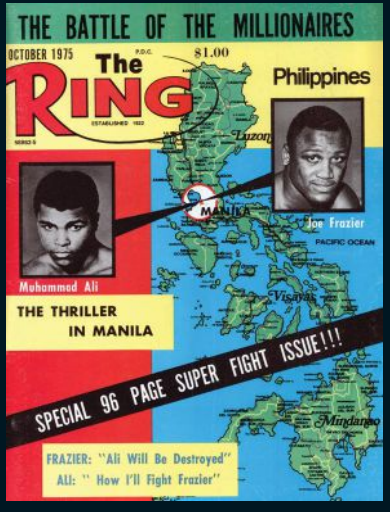

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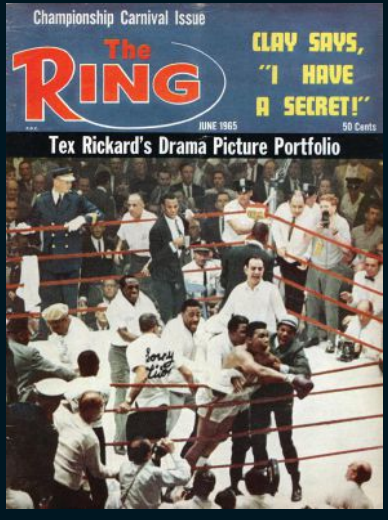

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